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COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF DICHOTOMOUS
EVENTS: THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GREAT RECESSION & COINCIDENTAL
INCREASED ENROLLMENT

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF DICHOTOMOUS EVENTS: THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GREAT RECESSION & COINCIDENTAL INCREASED ENROLLMENT

Corey W. Carlson
Old Dominion University, 2013

The community college, like all of higher education, has been significantly impacted by the Great Recession and coincidental increased enrollment. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the decision making processes of community college presidents as related to resource allocation and the impact of these decisions on the comprehensive community college mission. Declining state funding and increased enrollments have greatly impacted how community college leaders make decisions with leaders incorporating shared governance and informed decision-making. Community college leaders have also been proactively seeking out alternative revenue streams in order to help offset decreased state funding. Findings of this study show that there is no single best practice that community college leaders can employ in order to weather difficult times faced by their institution. Community college leaders continue to forge new ground in unknown times as they continue to search for a sustainable revenue source.

Keywords: community college, leadership, decision-making, funding, partnerships

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I have such gratitude for everybody who has entered my life. This sounds grandiose, but every bit of it is true. I have always taken joy with the idea premised by the poem *A Reason, A Season, A Lifetime* by Iyanla Vanzant which states that everybody you meet fits into one of these categories. While not everybody has, or could be, a lifetime member of my life, everybody I have met has played a critical role whether they are aware of it or not. While I would like to individually include, and thank, all of the people I have met, time and space prohibit me to only include the *season* and *lifetime* folks.

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In parting, I would like to share lyrics that have served as guidance and inspiration for me to continue to strive toward greatness as well as toward the unknown.

Reaching out to embrace the random.

Reaching out to embrace whatever may come.

I embrace my desire to

feel the rhythm, to feel connected

enough to step aside and weep like a widow

to feel inspired, to fathom the power,

to witness the beauty, to bathe in the fountain,

to swing on the spiral

of our divinity and still be a human.

~ Maynard James Keenan from the song *Lateralus* by Tool

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Higher education in the United States is at a crossroads (Jones & Wellman, 2010). Long-standing funding methods available throughout higher education are dwindling or disappearing altogether (Chabotar, 2010; Holley & Harris, 2010; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Kelderman, 2010; Palmer, 2012). Higher educational institutions have reached the point where existing funding methods simply do not work. Community colleges must consider non-traditional methods in order to continue operating (Murray & Orr, 2011). “Perhaps the greatest challenge for community college leaders in recent years has been declining state revenue” (D’Amico, Katsinas, & Friedel, 2012, p. 627). Coupled with steadily declining revenues is another major issue faced by higher education, namely increasing enrollments (Eggins & West, 2010; Holley & Harris, 2010; Maslin-Ostrowski, Floyd, & Hrabak, 2011; Murray & Orr, 2011). Just one of these challenges is a difficult hurdle to overcome. Both experienced simultaneously, however, have resulted in a challenge to some of the most crucial foundations of the community college mission (El-Khawas, 2011).

In critical times, community college leaders are faced with difficult decisions (Murray & Orr, 2011; Vitullo & Johnson, 2010). Currently, they must deal with decisions that would contradict the fundamental mission of the community college institution (El-Khawas, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski et al., 2011). A study by Vitullo and Johnson (2010) examining university presidents’ perspectives, showed a strong commitment to the mission of the institutions which the presidents represented. A review of the literature suggests that no such study exists related to community college administrators. Issues such as open access, equity, comprehensiveness, and community

are all on the “chopping block” as funds are no longer available to sustain these elements of the community college mission (Harbour, 2009; Murray & Orr, 2011; Vitullo & Johnson, 2010). For example (Harbour 2009), a president must decide whether to continue to allow every applicant to enroll, thereby running the risk of an excessive number of students, who may or may not complete their desired education path. Alternatively, should the president and their respective institutions’ limit enrollment through a selective admissions process, possibly compromising the community college mission, in order to obtain more favorable performance indicator measures. This factor, known as performance funding or performance accountability, appears to contradict the mission of the community college, yet it is widely accepted within higher educational funding schemes in the public sector (Harbour, 2009; Maxcy, 2011). This dilemma faced by community college leaders is significant for the continued health of the community college mission within the U.S. (Harbour, 2009).

Background of the Study

“Community colleges are distinguished from other institutions of higher education by their commitment to open access, comprehensiveness in course and program offerings, and community building” (Vaughn, 2006, p. 1). In America, community colleges enroll nearly 45 percent of all college students. There are over 1,000 public community colleges now in existence in all 50 states (Tollefson, 2009). Higher education is viewed as a positive component of society by both the citizenry and policy makers (Pillay, 2009). The funding balance, once in favor of the societal gains produced by postsecondary attendance, is shifting away from subsidized educational opportunity under the premise that educational gains are individual, and are no longer a collective

societal benefit (Trow, 1996). Long recognized state budget models are no longer a reliable source of revenue for community colleges (Chabotar, 2010; Descrochers & Wellman, 2011; Evelyn, 2004; Kelderman, 2010; Maxcy, 2011). The current budget crunch comes at a time when higher education institution funding is at some of the lowest amounts ever, and this coincidentally is occurring at the same time higher education, and community colleges specifically, are faced with record levels of enrollment (Carr, 2009; Descrochers & Wellman, 2011; Digest of Education Statistics, 2009; Eggins & West, 2010; Lucas, 2003; Murray & Orr, 2011).

As levels of unemployment and underemployment increase, it is normal for enrollment figures to increase concurrently (Betts & McFarland, 1995). Recessions are often viewed as times to re-educate or re-skill our nation's workforce. Typically, this is accomplished primarily through the community college (Eggins & West, 2010; Markham, 2008). Economic health is inversely related to enrollment growth in the community colleges (Tschechtelin, 2011). This dichotomy is where the current problem lies: record enrollment coupled with decreased funding (Carter, 2011; Murray & Orr, 2011). A variety of methods are being developed and implemented across the nation by community colleges as each such college attempts to find the right formula to weather this "perfect storm" (El-Khawas, 2011; Holley & Harris, 2010; Weisbrod & Asch, 2010).

Lack of funding for community colleges is an increasing problem at the state and federal levels (Carter, 2011, Vaughn, 2006). Government funds formerly available are declining or have already disappeared (Carr, 2009; Chabotar, 2010; Kenton, Schuh, Huba, & Shelley, 2005; Vitullo & Johnson, 2010; Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). From 1981

to 2001, state appropriations to community colleges declined from 47.1 percent to 34 percent (Roessler, 2006). State appropriations have served as the primary source of funding for public U.S. postsecondary institutions (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). According to the College Board (2006), during the five year period 2001-2002 until 2006-2007, public four-year institutions increased tuition, on average, by 35 percent while federal and state funding was reduced by up to 20 percent (Doyle & Delaney, 2009; Jones & Wellman, 2010). Many four-year institutions have endowments and have established alumni funding programs that have helped supplement the decrease in funding from traditional sources while community colleges have been bewildered by the prospect of searching for, and obtaining, additional funding (Chabotar, 2010). Community colleges are considerably new to the fundraising exercise in comparison to 4-year institutions (Jackson & Glass, 2000). This naiveté among community colleges is being countered by non-traditional thinking by leaders, resulting in some positive revenue-generating methods as well as best practices for practitioners to follow.

Conventional methods of managing state appropriation loss in higher education is to readdress, reassess, and reallocate programs, goals, and the workforce respectively (Brumbach & Villadsen, 2002; Dellow & Losinger, 2004; El-Khawas, 2011; Jones & Wellman, 2010). Formerly, higher educational institutions would simply realign programs, budgets, goals, and staff to accommodate budgetary shortfalls or enrollment fluctuations. Previous recessions were handled by “waiting it out” (D'Amico, Katsinas, & Friedel, 2012). While convention has typically been a stepping stone from which to start (i.e., learning from past mistakes), the current financial crisis is termed as a perfect storm because of the convergence of a struggling economy, increased educational demands

from the workforce, increased higher educational enrollments and decreased funding from traditional funding sources have all led to the suggestion that convention will not suffice (Lowry, 2011). Non-conventional fundraising methods that have increased in interest and implementation over the last ten years throughout all of higher educational institutions (i.e., public, private, two-year and four-year) include establishing foundations, partnering with local business and industry, focusing on alumni relations and enhancing private donor programs (Allen, 2002; Anderson, 2003; Carr, 2009; Errett, 2004; Garlich & Tesinsky, 2005; Greengard, 2009; LaBeouf, 2003; Milliron, de Los Santos, & Browning, 2003). Many community colleges are finding out that no sure fit formula exists among possible fundraising methodologies. Location, motivation by the administration and community, and leadership all play significantly into whether a particular method will succeed at a given institution.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this semi-structured qualitative study was to examine the decision making process(es) of community college presidents as related to resource allocation and the impact of these decisions on the comprehensive community college mission. The comprehensive mission of the community college includes providing: open access admission, a comprehensive curriculum, a student-centered learning environment, a community orientation to programming, and an economic development function (Vaughn, 2006).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

- 1 What effect(s) has the decline of state funding for community colleges had on community college presidents' decision making process(es) and its impact on the comprehensive community college model?
- 2 What effect(s) has the increase of student enrollment at community colleges had on community college presidents' decision making process(es) and its impact on the comprehensive community college model?

Professional Significance

Higher education in the United States not only provides an individual with the opportunity to gain knowledge and employability, higher education also drives the future of this country (Duncan, 2010). "Education is important for economic growth and for the human development of our country" (Tschechtelin, 2011, p. 49). A college education has become the *sine qua non* for entry level positions within the workforce. The community college is a significant contributor to the workforce by providing essential applied skills and knowledge as well as transferring students on to four-year institutions (Duncan, 2010). The economic crisis coupled with growing enrollment is compromising the institutions within higher education (Chabotar, 2010; Murray & Orr, 2011). David Baime, former vice president for government relations for the American Association of Community Colleges, as quoted by Carr (2009) stated, "an increase of this magnitude places enormous strains on these institutions, especially in the face of widespread budget cuts" (p. 23). Furthermore, these crises are compromising the comprehensive mission of the community college (Duncan & Ball, 2011; El-Khawas, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski et al., 2011). California's current crisis of "struggling to maintain their missions [community colleges] after budget cuts totaling more than \$809 million over the

past three years” is symptomatic of what is occurring in the rest of the United States (Gardner, 2012, p. 1). Recommendations for narrowing missions are being discussed as a method to increase efficiencies and decrease costs (Romano, 2012). Recommendations for narrowing missions (Romano, 2012) represent the antithesis of what a comprehensive community college mission stands for.

This study will inform higher educational leaders and future leaders by exploring these aforementioned issues, by gaining a “best-practices” perspective for dealing with “the perfect economic and enrollment storm,” by learning about the “real world” contemporary issues community college leaders face, and by understanding the decisions these leaders make.

Overview of the Methodology

The guiding methodology for this study was a multiple case studies qualitative method. Case study research is a staple “universal” tradition (Hays & Singh, 2011) that seeks to understand phenomenon where little to no research exists (Creswell, 2006). A semi-structured interview process was employed in order to obtain data that would not be attainable through traditional quantitative methods. Qualitative analysis will offer a deep and more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon than the more generalizable and detached quantitative methods can produce (Hays & Singh, 2011).

Participants. The research program selected participants through a sampling technique called “purposeful sampling” which incorporates specific criteria identified as important to the study, prior to conducting interviews (Patton, 2002). Participants were purposefully sampled because of the amount of detail regarding the level of involvement that they have and that they can provide (Hays & Singh, 2011). Participants included

community college presidents from community colleges in Arizona. This selection offered rural, urban, and suburban community college president perspectives as each geographical offering is assumed to provide varied experiences, involvement, and interactions.

Limitations. The following limitations have been identified.

1. Qualitative data were only gathered in order to gain a deep understanding of the issues and the resulting decisions made by those interviewed.
2. This study was limited to Arizona public community colleges. Private two-year and four-year institutions as well as public and private four-year institutions were not analyzed to increase efficacy for the results within public community colleges in Arizona.
3. Presidential perspectives, and the information they share, may be guarded, or presidents may not be willing to divulge information that may shed a negative light on their institutions.

Definition of Key Terms

Community college. This term refers to “a regionally accredited institution of higher education that offers the associate degree as its highest degree” (Vaughn, 2006, p. 1).

Community orientation to programming. This refers to the community colleges’ “commit[ment] to serving the needs of a designated geographic area” (Vaughn, 2006, p. 6).

Comprehensive curriculum. This is a concept offering a variety of academic programs in order to meet the varied needs of the community, such as workforce

development, the first two years of a bachelor's education, and developmental education (Vaughn, 2006).

Comprehensive mission of the community college. This expression refers to the community colleges' commitments to serving all members of the community through open-access admissions policies, comprehensive educational offerings, promotion of lifelong-learning, and commitment to teaching and learning (Vaughn, 2006).

Foundation. This is a "nonprofit organization [that is] incorporated to receive endowments and other types of funds for use by the community college with which they are affiliated" (Vaughn, 2006, p. 21).

Indicator or Performance Indicator. Such terms are measurements used by an organization or an industry to evaluate its success or failure of a mission or activity in which either is engaged (Cave, Hanney, Henkel, & Kogan, 1996; Borden & Botrill, 1994).

Mission. In the context of this study, a mission is an official statement of the aims and objectives of a business or organization (Baker, 1994; Vaughan, 1985).

Open access. This term denotes an "admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students" (Vaughn, 2006, p. 3).

State financial support. Such support refers to funding obtained through taxes received by the state and given to public community colleges (Vaughn, 2006).

Student centered learning environment. This identifies a context in which a devoted, scholarly faculty is capable of teaching with different styles and methods in order to reach the diverse learning needs of students (Vaughn, 2006).

Summary

Long-standing funding methods for higher education, and more specifically for community colleges, are decreasingly productive. State funding, the greatest source of revenue for community colleges (Vaughn, 2006), is decreasing in order to allow other areas to be funded, such as welfare and unemployment during the economic crisis (Betts & McFarland, 1995; Eggins & West, 2010; Markham, 2008). Increased enrollment at the community college nationwide has also become an increasing burden on community colleges, which are already struggling to operate on limited budgets and staff (Eggins & West, 2010; Holley & Harris, 2010; Maslin-Ostrowski, Floyd, & Hraback, 2011; Murray & Orr, 2011).

The comprehensive mission of the community college promotes equitable open-access admissions policies, comprehensive educational offerings, lifelong learning, and a commitment to teaching and learning (Vaughn, 2006). Decreased funding coupled with increased enrollments has community college administrators questioning their ability to maintain this comprehensive mission (El-Khawas, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski et al., 2011). This study attempts to understand community college presidents' perspectives of this seemingly "perfect storm" of decreased funding and increased enrollment during the economic crisis through qualitative analyses. Arizona community college presidents were interviewed in order to gain phenomenon-rich data. This study will be able to facilitate community college administrators, as well as possibly other higher educational institutions, comprehension of the issues delineated above as well as gaining a "best-practices" approach in navigating similar issues in the future.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study sought to discover community college presidents' perspectives about financially maintaining a community college, as well as continuing to promote a comprehensive mission during a time of financial crisis and increased enrollment. This review of the literature will align the context and justification for this study. This chapter will first address the institution of higher education, and then narrow its focus to the community college, and then to community colleges within Arizona. This chapter will then address the financial and enrollment crises along with precipitating factors. Additionally, this chapter will highlight examples of what community colleges are doing to alleviate the significant impact that decreased funding has had. This review will also discuss the shortcomings of current methods of funding and crisis management. It will also present existing alternative methodologies. Finally, this chapter will look at community college leadership characteristics and functions as well as internal and external perceptions and expectations.

Higher Education

Evidence supports the notion that higher education is a benefit to society (Fisher, 2006; Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1998; Lewis & Hearn, 2003; Murray, 2009; Preston & Green, 2003; Preston & Hammond, 2003). According to Mullin (2010), there is a national priority to increase the number of Americans with educational attainment beyond that of a high school diploma. Over the last twenty years, globalization and automation have decreased the amount of "jobs at the bottom of the skill ladder while creating new and better-paying jobs at the top" (Levy & Murnac, 2005). Thus, this ladder inversion has resulted in increased U.S. recognition of not just higher education, but all

aspects of education (Levy & Murnac, 2005; Ramage, 2011). Between 1999 and 2009, degree-granting postsecondary institutions saw an increase in enrollment of 38 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). All levels of education are considered the financial responsibility of the state and region (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). The increase in student enrollment is occurring at a time of deteriorating state budgets, leading to very difficult decisions regarding how to finance high quality, higher education (Carter, 2011; Harbour, 2009).

The Comprehensive Community College

The community college is an institution built upon change and fluidity (Levin & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 1998). As an institution of responsiveness, open-access, and non-traditionality, the community college has become a seminal beacon of accessible contemporary higher education (Levin et al., 1998). This is evidenced by the 1,000 plus community colleges located in all 50 United States, and by the fact that nearly half of all postsecondary enrollment in the U.S. exists at the nation's community colleges (Tollefson, 2009). The mission of the community college is robust and comprehensive in nature, and includes as its central tenets open-access, equity, comprehensive educational offerings, community, and lifelong learning (Baker, 1994; Vaughan, 1985).

A comprehensive curriculum is an important component of the community college mission. This curriculum meets the needs of transfer students, developmental and remedial students, and the development of the workforce (Baker, 1994; Vaughan, 1985). The comprehensive curriculum of the community college is non-traditional when compared to its 4-year institutional brethren, and is the community colleges' greatest

strength for sustaining the foundational cornerstone it has established within so many communities throughout the U.S. (Schuyler & ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, 1999). Community college (formerly known as Junior College) academic curriculum began as the primary focus, according to an analysis of college course offerings in college catalogues prior to 1930 (Eells, 1931). However, analysis of curriculum offerings by Eells (1931) from 1921 through 1930 already indicated a firm decline in academic courses with an increase of nonacademic and vocational courses. Even at its earliest stages, the community college was transforming its academic mission. An analysis similar to that done by Eells was conducted two decades later by Putnam (1951). Putnam's analysis showed the evolution of the community college taking on more community-focused, non-vocational and non-academic courses. Medsker (1960) analyzed the occupational offerings of community colleges during the 1950s.

Medsker (1960) discovered that more than two-thirds of the community colleges surveyed offered business occupational coursework along with significant offerings in other fields. Later still, research by Koos (1970) would illustrate the incorporation of remedial coursework by the community college as early as the 1930s, which would later become a stronger movement between the 1940s through 1950s. This brief overview illustrates the early evolution of the community college from a primarily liberal arts institutional focus to a more comprehensive curriculum with the inclusion of vocational, remedial, and community oriented courses.

Community College Funding

In 2007-08, community colleges served 43 percent of all U.S. undergraduate students while only receiving 27 percent of total federal, state, and local revenues

(Mullin, 2010). Community college funding has decreased, and continues to decrease, at unsustainable rates (Bass, 2003; Holley & Harris, 2010; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Compared to other areas of education and even other higher education counterparts, community colleges typically receive the least per capita funding (Markham, 2008). In 2008, state appropriations to community colleges accounted for 30.5 percent of their operating revenue (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder; 2008) compared to 24.4 percent in 2011 (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder; 2012). Local appropriations during this time also declined, although not as drastically, from 17.9 percent of community college operating revenue to 16.5 percent (Knapp et al., 2012). Non-operating grants during this same time rose 12.5 percent from 11.3 to 23.6 percent for community colleges (Knapp et al., 2010, 2012).

Community colleges are funded differently across the United States (Paulsen & Smart, 2001). How each community college generates or acquires revenue through revenue streams can differ greatly as a result of how states independently budget and allocate funds (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). A majority of community colleges receive state funding through a formulaic method of either responsive or functional component funding (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). Funding formulas use a non-biased method of linking institutional characteristics to state and federal funding (Markham, 2008). Responsive funding models utilize formulas to appropriate funds proportional to institutional differential expenditures compared to prior year budgets. Functional component funding looks at the multiple components that make up the community college (e.g., student services, plant operations, and instruction) and funds each component given a state-specified formula (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). While funding

formulaic disparities exist among states, what remains the same is the intent, “to justify the need for, or allocation of, state appropriations (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007, p. 122).

Four formulaic methodologies are prevalent within community college funding (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007).

- Negotiated budget funding occurs when an appropriation is negotiated through an institution, or representative, and the institutions’ home legislature.
- Unit-rate formulas are dependent upon the operations budget of an institution.
- Minimum foundation funding applies the burden of funding mostly on the local wealth of the community in which the institution serves while providing minimum funding from the state-level.
- Cost-based program funding is an extension of unit-rate funding, although it also takes programmatic costs into consideration when determining the budgetary allocation.

While a variety of formulaic methodologies exist, one truth remains constant; state fund appropriations are declining (Carter, 2011; Harbour, 2009). In light of the varied formulaic methodologies, McMillen (2010) offers a comprehensive perspective on the importance of establishing key individuals from an institution to continually be engaged with local, state, and federal legislators in order to gain favor through appropriations via the negotiated budget model. The practices outlined by McMillen (2010) serve as an indication of the groundwork necessary to address budgetary shortfalls by higher educational institutions.

In addition to the general state formulaic method of funding community colleges, there is a relatively new accountability-based funding formula called performance-based

funding. Performance-based funding assesses state-approved indicators such as transfer rates, graduation numbers and attrition. The indicators can vary from state to state, and often times, vary within a state between community colleges and four-year degree-granting institutions (Burke & Surban, 1998). A college's appropriation can either increase or diminish if the performance indicators do not properly align with its institutional goals and mission (Zarkesh & Beas, 2004). Performance-based funding can increase an institution's revenue significantly if the specified indicators are met or exceeded. The rationale for performance-based funding is that this methodology for funding provides accountability for taxpayer-invested dollars. With the increased demand for accountability and traditional revenue streams declining, performance-based funding is becoming more accepted among those responsible for funding higher educational institutions. The two states that have employed performance-based funding for the longest time are Tennessee and Florida (Dougherty & Natow, 2010). Tennessee has the longest and most successful model of this model which has served administrations of both political parties for more than 25 years (Bogue & Johnson, 2010). Florida, on the other hand, has had a mixed history with performance-based funding. Performance funding within Florida has fluctuated in appropriation formulas, often lagging in response to enrollments (Dougherty & Natow, 2010). Appropriation percentages in Florida have been susceptible to political pressures in addition to fluid performance indicators (Dougherty & Natow, 2010). Performance funding in Florida has provided several lessons for those states that would implement and operate this type of funding mechanism (Dougherty & Natow, 2010; Dougherty et al., 2011). Performance-based funding can propel community colleges (Zarkesh & Beas, 2004) but a strong need for national

standardization exists. With ever-decreasing taxpayer funds available and an increased call for accountability, it is likely that performance-based funding is here to stay, and may even grow.

In the earlier days of community colleges, tuition and fees were relatively low, and in some cases non-existent. This source of support was a larger revenue stream than it is currently because of the increase in federal, state, and local subsidy (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). Tuition and fees have become a significant expenditure for students and their families; and are the one source of revenue that a community college can usually rely on. When other revenue streams decline, tuition and fees can be increased to account for that shortfall. While this may seem like a sustainable revenue source, this is not an entirely accurate picture. Tuition and fees are not indicative of the actual costs to an institution of providing an education. Community colleges have worked diligently to become efficient stewards of taxpayer funds, and to streamline wherever possible. It would be the antithesis of the comprehensive community college mission to continue to increase tuition as a means to counter decreased funding, in the context of constant or increased enrollments. Markham (2008) speaks to the reliance on tuition by community colleges: “the open-door admissions policies of community colleges are inherently threatened when institutions rely on unstable funding” (p. 4).

Arizona. Arizona is one of the states most impacted by budget reduction and increased enrollment. Arizona community colleges receive funding through “primary property tax levy; tuition and fees; operating state aid; capital outlay state aid; equalization aid; bonds and other forms of indebtedness; and grants, gifts and donations” (Arizona State Senate, 2009, p. 2).

- Primary property taxes are the largest source of revenue for Arizona community colleges which are estimated at approximately 38 percent of the colleges' revenue (State of Arizona, 2011).
- Tuition and fees account for approximately 19 percent of Arizona community college revenue (State of Arizona, 2011).

According to the community college funding formula typology delineated by Mullin and Honeyman (2007), Arizona employs an equalized responsive methodology. This method incorporates various thresholds in order to determine where equalization aid may be appropriate. Within Arizona, equalization aid is based on whether the property tax bases within a community college district are less than a minimum assessed value (State of Arizona, 2011).

Arizona community colleges receive only 10 percent of their funding from the state (Joch, 2011). This is in stark contrast to previous decades when state funding hovered between 25 and 30 percent (Moltz, 2009). The state funds the maintenance and operational needs of Arizona community colleges via a formula which rewards increased full-time student equivalency (FTSE) but does not penalize for decreased FTSE (Arizona State Senate, 2009). For example, if a community college had 150 FTSE less than the prior year, its budget would not suffer reduction; funding would remain the same for the following year.

In 2011, Arizona enacted the third largest budget cut (12 percent) in the entire United States for higher education (Tschechtelin, 2011). Community college funding from the state of Arizona underwent a significant decrease, evident in the budget reduction of 50 percent from \$138,955,500 in 2010 to only \$71,089,000 in 2012 (State of

Arizona, 2011, Tschechtelin, 2011). Yavapai Community College, an extreme case, has had its budget reduced to the extent that just one percent of its expenses are supported by state funding (Joch, 2011). Arizona community colleges have consequently learned to do more with less when compared to other states, evident in the educational spending per completion metric established by College Completion (2012). According to College Completion (2012), Arizona spends roughly \$33,673 per student completion, which is more than \$9,000 less than the national average of \$42,759.

State, federal, and local communities have traditionally funded the community college; helping to keep costs at a minimum for students and their families while promoting a comprehensive mission to serve the community. These traditional methods of funding higher education, and more specifically, the community college, are quickly decreasing.

The 2008 - 2009 Financial Recession

Although education has experienced financial downturns throughout U.S. history, the recent financial recession is the largest and longest economic decline since the depression of the early twentieth century (Maxcy, 2011). In what might best be considered as an alignment of the stars of improbable events, the effects of the recession on higher education can be thought of best as a culmination of multiple minor events that altogether caused a fundamental crisis not seen “since the Great Depression” (Gempesaw, 2009, p. 333). There was not a single cause for the current circumstance, but rather a multitude of improbable events all occurring within a relatively short time frame which resulted in one of the worst crises to hit academia in history (Maxcy, 2011).

The first star to align was the subprime mortgage crisis of 2008. According to O'Driscoll (2009), the federal government was, in part, to blame. From 2001-2004, the federal funds rate was below 2 percent when, "[i]t literally paid to borrow money" (O'Driscoll, 2009, p. 4). Also, during this time, inflation-adjusted short-term rates were actually negative (O'Driscoll, 2009; Obi, Jeong-Gil, & Sil, 2011). Because of the advantages of such a low funds rate, housing markets appreciated dramatically, and buyers came from everywhere willing to spend a great deal of borrowed money to purchase real estate (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; O'Driscoll, 2009). Also contributing to the housing boom were poor lending practices by banks (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; Immergluck, 2011; Madrick, 2011; Obi et al., 2011).

Normally constricted by heavy regulation, which resulted in conservative lending and investing practices, deregulation of commercial and investment banks saw the market increases as a chance to cash-in just like the borrowers they were lending to (Madrick, 2011; Obi et al., 2011). Banks began to purchase their own securities, borrowing from short-term funds in order to meet long-term lending demands. This was a practice reminiscent of the savings and loan debacle of the 1980s (O'Driscoll, 2009). Once again, because of market influence, banks began offering easier credit, while ignoring the telltale signs of collapse. Many of these loans went to borrowers and to people who ordinarily would not qualify for mortgages (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; Madrick, 2011). Along with easy credit, realtors and banks began to accept little or no down payments for houses, which led to a spiral of easy credit, no down payments, and increasing housing availability (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; O'Driscoll, 2009). The problems caused by borrower defaults then led to the crash of the stock

markets which resulted in a sharp decline in economic growth (Baran, 2011; Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011).

As the housing boom came to a halt, other areas of the United States economy began to falter (Baran, 2011), which led to the stock market crash of 2008. Banks were under pressure to sustain their unprecedented gains while their actual practices were causing them to fold (Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, 2011; O'Driscoll, 2009). A great deal of wealth was lost in this fiasco ultimately resulting in the intervention of the federal government. Congress allocated over \$750 billion to financial institutions under Public Law 110-343 (Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008) in the hopes of ushering in a new era of dependable and accountable financial practices by the nation's leading banks (Public Law, 2008).

Another incident of minimal consequence, but when added to the whole resulted in the quagmire that higher education now faces, was the mismanagement of private higher educational money. Chief financial officers and foundation members of institutions with considerable endowments, before the market crash, recognized the low stock prices as a chance to significantly increase institutional revenue (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). While higher educational endowments are usually reserved for a "rainy day" or an unforeseeable crisis in which large funds are required, some institutions decided to play the market with their endowments (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). Some institutions were able to increase their net worth, albeit for a little while. When the market crashed, so did the endowments of these institutions who decided to gamble (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). While this was a small minority of institutions, the amounts lost were significant and publicized widely.

The decline of stock markets, the housing bust and fallibility of higher educational institutions investments all coming together had a devastating impact. First, private donations to institutions decreased by 5.7 percent from 2007 to 2008 (Weisbrod & Asch, 2010). Next, institutions began to experience even higher decreases in funding from states. According to Doyle & Delaney (2009), and Jones & Wellman (2010), students and their institutions are not considered a high priority in times of recession, and therefore funds are re-allocated to other state funded programs like Temporary Assistance to Needy Families or Medicaid. During times of recession, states have less money coming in due to decreased sales and income taxes. With decreases in income and increases in welfare spending, educational needs become marginalized.

Students are ultimately the most burdened by the impact of a financial recession. Institutions increase tuition in order to cover basic costs, overhead and expenses which are typically covered through state subsidies and/or donor gifts. Because of the decreases seen in both of these revenue sources, institutions have no other choice but to increase tuition. While tuition has increased significantly over the last three decades, according to Carney (2008), tuition has not increased as much as was actually needed by institutions. This has also led to the deficits caused by the higher education financial downturn.

The impacts of the current financial shortfalls in higher education are far-reaching and not all have been recognized at this point in the recovery. Some immediately recognizable consequences will include a decrease in state-based budgets, across the United States, on average of 10 percent during the next one to three years (Jones & Wellman, 2010). Budget cuts lead to layoffs, furloughs, and hiring freezes among faculty and administration (Doyle & Delaney, 2009; Holley & Harris, 2010). The Long Beach

City College District in California recently reduced staff by 56 while still facing “the area’s largest local high-school graduating classes ever... [along with] a 12 percent unemployment rate...” (Gardner, 2012, p. 8). Because of this, increased work-loads are then spread across both faculty and administrators leading towards job-dissatisfaction. Class sizes must increase as well to save money on facilities and faculty spending. Ultimately, nearly every aspect of student services decreases, (i.e., larger class sizes, less “face time” with faculty/administrators, etc.) at the same time as students are burdened with the costs of rising tuition.

While many offer advice on “weathering the storm,” it is up to institutional leaders to determine which methods offer sustainable and effective remedies. Edelson (2009) and Wellman (2008) both offer an abundance of methods which executive leaders, administrators, and even faculty can implement in order to bring sustainability back to higher educational institutions. Of the most notable, Edelson (2009) suggests that leaders address the entirety of the problem being faced as well as broadening decision making into an institutional effort. By involving staff, faculty, students, and administrators alike, each person who plays an institutional role will have a stronger commitment to seeking solutions to any problems encountered. Wellman (2008) suggests that institutional leaders will need to clearly define goals and outcomes in light of the problem(s) faced (Wellman, 2008). The most important mindset, according to Weisbrod & Asch (2010) and Doyle & Delaney (2009), is to not plan on the return of pre-recession-funding. This seems to be a consensus as Jones & Wellman (2010, p. 8) suggest “...muddling through will no longer be enough.”

The current financial recession within higher education can be thought of as the perfect storm. There was not a single factor, but a battery of factors that ultimately caused the crisis. Economic swings are all too common within any field, but it is within the realm of higher education that we find significant research from which to draw conclusions. The 2008 - 2009 recession and economic stagnation came at a time when higher education, and more specifically, community colleges, were encountering record increased enrollment. As Tschechtelin (2011) suggests, economic health is inversely related to enrollment growth within the community college. A retrospective look at these juxtaposed events forms the focus of this study.

Enrollment Boom

Between 1985 and 2010, there was a 78 percent increase in undergraduate enrollment in the United States (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Community college enrollment is growing at a faster rate than 4-year institutions (Jurgens, 2010). From 2000 to 2010, community college enrollment increased 26 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). From the fall of 2008 to the fall of 2009 alone, there was an increase in community college credit-bearing course enrollment of 11.4 percent, and a 16.9 percent increase from the fall of 2007 to the fall of 2009 (Mullin & Phillippe, 2009). Additionally, community college full-time enrollment increased by 24.1 percent between the fall of 2007 and the fall of 2009 (Mullin & Phillippe, 2009). According to David Baime (2011), senior vice president at the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), during the economic downturn, U.S. community colleges encountered a 1.4 million headcount increase while enduring “brutal cuts in the state and local support [which] accounted for 55 percent of their revenue” (Baime, 2011, p. 1-2). Arizona

community colleges experienced a 9.7 percent increase in FTSE from 2010 to 2011 (State of Arizona, 2011).

With enrollment increasing and traditional funding sources decreasing, community college leaders are faced with the challenge of locating alternative revenues. The following sections will discuss methods being discussed to raise funds to substitute for public sources.

Alternative Revenue Methods for Community Colleges

Fundraising. With state funding declining, fundraising has gained momentum within the community college sector (Carter, 2011). According to Markham (2008), community college leaders “must seek alternative funding methods in order to maintain effective services” (p. 23). Heretofore, viewed as an unnecessary, or at least low priority, fundraising at the community college level has not been the subject of substantial research (Jackson & Glass, 2000; Wagoner & Besikof, 2011). Hearn (2003) suggests that community colleges forge their way into private sources of funding in order to maintain even the most basic services and programs. Community colleges only generate two percent of all higher education charitable funds (Lanning, 2008). Wagoner and Besikof (2011) recommend that one of the best methods for not transferring the costs of decreased state assistance to students is through the efforts of fundraising.

According to Stevenson (2001), fundraising at the community college includes activities such as: phone solicitation, major gifts programs, capital campaigns, annual giving programs, prospect research programs, grants writing and special events. Dove (2000) suggested that the most effective fundraising techniques for community colleges include planned giving, major gifts, annual giving, and prospect research programs.

Jackson and Glass (2000), and Carter (2011) found that community colleges receive considerably less income via fundraising than 4-year institutions that have a long history of private fundraising. A significant factor affecting fundraising efforts, according to Ryan and Palmer (2005), is whether community colleges are rural, urban, or suburban. Urban and suburban community colleges have more constituents in business and industry, who are more likely to donate to a college's foundation than to geographically isolated community colleges (Ryan, 1989). However, urban and suburban institutions must compete against each other for sources, which may give rural community colleges a slight advantage as there is less competition for the few sources available (Ryan, 1989).

Community college leaders have recognized the need for, and often have assumed the lead role in, institutional fundraising efforts (Anderson, 2003; Errett, 2004; Milliron, de Los Santos, & Browning, 2003; Roueche & Jones, 2005; Wagoner & Besikof, 2011). Research shows that the community college president's role is critical to fundraising even though some presidents feel it is not a part of the job (Carter, 2011; McGee, 2003; Wagoner & Besikof, 2011; Cipres, 1999; Montoya, 2007; Wenrich & Reid, 2003). In 2001, the George B. Vaughan Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS) summarized community college presidential responsibilities, and showed proactive fundraising as a significant activity of a community college president, accounting for 9.5 percent of a president's time (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). With the economic downturn of 2008 and the decrease in state funding since the CLS study was conducted, coupled with the pressure on community college presidents to accomplish more (Esters, McPhail, Singh, & Sygielski, 2008), it can be deduced that fundraising should have become an increased priority. This component of a community college president's activities may be viewed

negatively by faculty, staff members and trustees, but according to Ryan et al. (2003), the traditional, academic view of presidential leadership is antiquated and must undergo a perspective transformation. Community colleges must look beyond tuition and government subsidies in order to survive, and it is through the concentrated efforts of community college presidents that community colleges can evolve (Carter, 2011; Moore, 2001). Deans can and must step up as academic leaders, and fund-raisers, to assist this transitioning movement of academic perspective evolution (Smith, 1994). According to Smith (1994), perspectives about academia must evolve along with the institutions themselves, and it will behoove community college leadership to undertake at least minor public relations campaigns to assist this transitioning ideology.

Funding through active participation. Community college leaders can also lead the efforts in vying directly or indirectly for governmental budget funds (Markham, 2008; McMillen, 2011). “[Community college p]residents need to be better than ever before in making the case for support at the local, state, and federal governmental levels” (Duncan & Ball, 2011, p. 61). Community college leaders can undertake lobbying, or hiring lobbyists, on behalf of the institution, at the state or national levels. Actively participating with federal and state governments is a method of fundraising that is increasing in popularity as state and federal budgets are decreasing with seemingly more, “competing interests vying for a slice of the same shrinking budget pie” (J. Murray, 2009, p. 12). Lobbyists can convey the institutions’ “Case or story to tell” to our governmental leaders, those in charge of the allocation of significant amounts of money, in a method that would not be possible to the community college president or leadership team (McMillen, 2011; C. Murray, 2009). This fundraising does cost a significant amount, although the return on

investment is often viewed as a worthwhile expense (McMillen, 2011). If lobbying is deemed too pricey or too much of a time commitment by community college leaders, other methods of conveying financial need to political representatives, according to J. Murray (2009), include: inviting legislators on campus to discuss institutional achievements, publishing letters and opinion pieces regarding the successes of the institution and, finally, encouraging students who are directly affected by financial problems to meet with legislators so that they may see the “human element” of the problems they are working with (C. Murray, 2009). Research also suggests that it is crucial to sustain contact with legislators during non-crisis times just as much as during critical times (McMillen, 2011; C. Murray, 2009; J. Murray, 2009). Community colleges can also work together to form alliances directed toward a common goal within the state and federal legislative arenas (Friedel, 2010).

Foundations. Foundations have become commonplace for a majority of community colleges (Carter, 2011; Glass & Jackson, 1998). According to Phillippe & Eblinger (1998), by 1997, nearly 90 percent of the nation’s community colleges had established foundations. Foundations are “incorporated 501(c)(3) organizations.... [that] exist to raise and manage private resources supporting the mission and priorities of...” the institution (Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, 2011, n.p.). A well-managed foundation can utilize institutional and alumni resources as a method for building sustainable revenue for community colleges (Markham, 2008). Historically, foundations took a less active role in the acquisition of funds (Robinson, 1981), although today’s economic crunch has resulted in a more active and aggressive foundation in

which at least one or even a team of adept personnel actively pursue different fund types (Ryan et al., 2005).

Partnerships. “The need for 21st-century community colleges to become flexible, market-responsive providers of postsecondary education, worker retraining and certification, and continuing education stems from the need for ever-evolving job skills in a continually changing work environment” (MacAllum, Yoder, & Pliakoff, 2004, p. 1). Many trades such as healthcare and information technology have created a market for training and curriculum development. Community colleges are positioned to meet those needs through the development of partnerships and entrepreneurial thinking by college leadership. Community colleges have historically been collaborators within their communities; it is only as of late that active partnerships have developed into vital revenue generators (Garcia, 2009).

Community colleges must be enterprising in their efforts to develop effective, competitive, and long-lasting partnerships. More importantly, community college leaders must become entrepreneurial in their behaviors, and attitudes (Carr, 2009; Esters et al., 2008). Esters et al. (2008) discovered that integrating a pioneering culture into an existing institutional mindset is a most effective mechanism for community college leaders to employ in garnering support for fundraising and partnership practices. The community college leader faces the role of developing and promoting a culture of responsiveness and adaptability. By promoting such a culture, the college is able to be market- responsive, and is able to establish partnerships, and contract training and workforce development programs to meet community demands with little time or community support restraints.

Partnerships can be a significant entrepreneurial effort for community colleges. Business and industry partnerships can be developed with the bulk of the expense paid by the business partners (Roueche & Jones, 2005; Voogt, 2009). The business partners get a highly qualified labor force, and are able to compete more effectively in the market while spending relatively few dollars in return. Carr (2009) describes an example of the automotive technology program at Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) in Portland. The SMCC president, James Ortiz, reached out to local car dealers, and, within a year, had 10 full partners all providing cash donations, equipment and even internships to some students (Carr, 2009). The SMCC example exemplifies the most important aspect of a successful partnership building in that it should be fiscally autonomous from the institution or highly subsidized by the private sector of the partnership and/or charge fees consistent with market demand (Flanningan, Greene, & Jones, 2005). The SMCC example also highlights an entrepreneurial action taken by the president to actively reach out to the community for support. It is important for community college leaders to work closely with business and industry leaders to build alliances in order to meet the needs of students as well as the community. College leaders must be proactive in their activities, and not be afraid to tout their institutions' successes, capabilities and offerings (Roueche & Jones, 2005). Community college presidents need to become active community members, and the public face of their institutions (Esters et al., 2008). Colleges and leaders will also need to be creative in developing solutions for business, industry and curriculum (Esters et al., 2008). The adage of "thinking outside the box" is appropriate as community colleges are only limited by their inability to think beyond tradition.

Rufus Glasper, chancellor of the Maricopa Community College District of Arizona, has tasked his administrators to seek alternative funding streams as a preemptive measure to offset decreased state funding (Moltz, 2009). Glasper's vision is to be independent of state funding and has encouraged the community colleges within the district to seek corporate partnerships (Moltz, 2009). Ambitious institutional leaders result in colleges that mimic the proficiency and market responsiveness of successful private businesses (Roueche & Jones, 2005). Ultimately, this should be the goal of all community colleges, namely, to be as efficient and streamlined as private business and industry, and thinking entrepreneurially is the first step towards that goal. As Wallin (2007) notes though, the ethical leader must employ due diligence, keeping in mind the primary institutional mission when establishing partnerships. For a community college leader, it is important to make sure partnerships are not launched without giving full consideration to all possible underrepresented groups (Wallin, 2007).

Private business and industry partnership examples. There are numerous examples of successful partnerships between community colleges and the private sector. One example is the formation of the Gulf Coast Petrochemical Information Network (GC-PIN). GC-PIN which resulted from the petrochemical industry's need to expand operations in Texas at a time of shortage in qualified labor. Local community colleges partnered with industry leaders to create the GC-PIN, which is now able, "to develop industry-specific curricula, retrain existing employees, and foster industry career awareness" resulting in "achieving results that would otherwise be unattainable" (Hodgin & Muha, 2008). Another example includes the state-approved associate of applied science degree and the one-year certificate degree in wind energy technology (WET)

through Cloud Country Community College (CCCC) in Kansas (Krull, Graham, & Underbakke, 2009). CCCC is preparing for U.S. Department of Energy predictions that at least 80,000 permanent jobs will be created by the wind industry (Krull, Graham, & Underbakke, 2009). Kansas is a state at the forefront of wind farming with a projected need for 625 new technician and management positions. Industry partnerships provide the cutting-edge knowledge and employment opportunities needed to sustain student interest (Krull, Graham, & Underbakke, 2009). Both the GC-PIN and CCCC examples demonstrate entrepreneurial thinking, action and positive results. Enterprising partnerships at the community college can elicit and sustain positive public relations for the college, students, and the private sector. Downsides to partnerships include the erosion of autonomy and the need to share strategic mission and visions with businesses.

McLaughlin, Starobin, & Laanan (2010) discuss how advanced technological medical simulation in the health science curriculum is reducing the number of accidental deaths due to medical errors by providing simulation in high-risk, low-frequency events and procedures. Medical simulation is an expensive practice because of the advanced technologies involved, and is almost unmentionable to most community college budget managers, but local medical centers and hospitals are partnering with community colleges to produce graduates trained in this field (McLaughlin et al., 2010). The medical industry provides the highly priced, equipment needed for instruction, and the community college trains students to operate the equipment. Partnerships between the private sector and the community college have the capability of providing positive results to all constituents as well as to the community (Roueche & Jones, 2005). Entrepreneurial thinking and cultivation among the campus community is an important start that every president can

and should encourage (Esters et al., 2008). Partnerships are one component of operating “outside the box”. By soliciting business partnerships, community colleges can increase revenue, and facilitate the economic betterment of the communities they represent (Esters et al., 2008; Roueche & Jones, 2005).

Property tax levies. One funding method that has sometimes proven successful for revenue generation is property tax levies. Property tax levies are an additional tax on homeowners that must be voted into place by a state, city or county’s citizenry. Property tax levies can range from 0.3 percent to upwards of 5 percent, depending on statelimits. This method has been successful in states like California and Nebraska where there has historically been strong support for higher education (Manwaring, 2005; Nebraska Community College System, 2011). As property tax levies are a direct cost to the citizenry, such levies may prove to be politically unpopular, especially during times of economic difficulty. Introducing property tax levies can be especially difficult during tumultuous economic times, although once passed, tax levies can be a dependable funding source. There are primary and secondary property taxes from which a community college can derive revenue (State of Arizona, 2011). Primary property taxes are used by institutions to cover operating budgets while secondary property taxes are used to address capital outlay (State of Arizona, 2011). Tax levies are a workable method of subsidizing community college funding if they are well thought out, and can be “sold” to a community during a time of economic progress or stability. This method can be a feasible instrument for community colleges to work towards autonomy from state and federal subsidies, although considerable planning and public relations work must be done to assist in its implementation.

Service learning. Another alternative funding method is the capitalization of special talents, services or products. This method is not a means to generate substantial revenue, although it can be a convenient mechanism to provide program or department subsidies, typically in career and technical education (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Another name for this method is “service learning,” where students learn and gain knowledge through active participation in their specific trade or field. This method of learning “reflects... Deweyian influence” of experiential learning and cognitive development (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 78). While this idea originated as a way for immersing student teachers into real-life teaching, this idea has transformed into a larger context where most students can, and should, have the opportunity to gain “hands-on” experience. The community college can facilitate this learning process, in addition to creating revenue, by establishing service learning opportunities for trades that the college excels in. For example, many community colleges offer an automotive technology curriculum. The community college can develop a business which would serve the community based on the work done by the automotive technology student’s work. The costs can be subsidized by the public in exchange for the understanding that the work is being conducted by a student, and not a professional. This way, the student gets hands-on experience while the college takes in revenue that it can use to fund the program. Service learning can assist students in career choice and development while the college can benefit from a higher demand for career enhancement by the community as well as a subsidized program that does not place a financial burden on the rest of the college (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

Community College Leadership

Contemporary community college leaders are faced with a strikingly different landscape than their predecessors. Community college administrators today must balance decreased funding and increased enrollments all while trying to preserve and promote a comprehensive mission (Markham, 2008). Community college leaders recognize the broad roles their institutions play within a community, and that it is important for them as leaders to address their varied constituencies internally and externally (Wallin, 2007). When facing institutional financial challenges, community college leaders must be willing to establish the course and trajectory of the institution in light of the prevailing uncertainties (Markham, 2008).

Competencies and traits. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has compiled a list of competencies which community college leaders can, and should, exhibit. The competencies which community college leaders should exhibit and aspire to include (1) organizational strategy, (2) resource management, (3) communication, (4) collaboration, (5) community college advocacy, and (6) professionalism (AACC, 2012). These attributes do not serve as a destination but as a direction for current and future community college leaders as leadership is a lifelong process (AACC, 2012). The community college is a dynamic and fluid institution which will demand a shift in competencies depending on the varying tasks of importance (AACC, 2012). The AACC (2012) emphasizes that the list of competencies is not stagnant, but a living document, and that leadership skills will need to grow based on growing accountability demands, increased technological advancements, globalization, and greater student diversity. Effective leaders will be able to incorporate these competencies into their own unique styles.

With an impending “sea change” in community college presidential leadership, research by Plinske and Packard (2010) took into account the perceived most important characteristics that future community college presidents must evince. A significant number of characteristics were mentioned by Plinske and Packard’s (2010) research. The primary traits included (1) passion for education, (2) dependability, (3) energy, (4) calm under pressure, (5) charisma, and (6) community involvement. Plinske and Packard (2010) also compiled a list of competencies desired by governing boards for community college presidents. These competencies included (1) ability to establish trust, (2) knowledge of accounting and finance, (3) community college funding knowledge, (4) community needs, and (5) legal issues. In light of the current demands facing community colleges, Tschechtelin (2011) suggests that community college leaders must go beyond traditional means to sustain the mission and vision of the community college. Community college leaders will need to incorporate radical changes in order to weather and quell such unprecedented trends that they face (Tschechtelin, 2011).

Leading during change. “Leading organizational change is among the most important and challenging leadership responsibilities” (Malm, 2008, p. 614). It is important to conduct a significant amount of background research before implementing any organizational change (McKinney & Morris, 2010). Community college leaders are faced with a number of variables when orchestrating change within an institution, such as entrenched interests, inherent uncertainty, antiquated processes, declining state funding, increased enrollment, with the list seemingly unending (Cummings, 1999; Malm, 2008; State Higher Education Executive Officers [SHEEO], 2011). Kotter’s (1996) seminal guide to major organizational change can provide an important reference from which to

begin including (1) establish a sense of urgency, (2) develop a guiding coalition, (3) develop a vision and strategy, (4) communicate the change vision, (5) empower employees for action, (6) facilitate and recognize short term accomplishments, (7) consolidate gains to produce more change, and (8) anchor new approaches within the culture. Additionally, Yukl (2002) has delineated the major leadership characteristics identified by successful leaders, which are (1) trait, (2) behavior, (3) power-influence, (4) situational, and (5) integrative.

According to Malm (2008), successful community college leaders exude Yukl's characteristics during times of organizational change. Leadership research provides ample evidence of successful methods as well as characteristics, although there is no prescribed order or characteristic that is critical to being a successful leader during times of change (Malm, 2008). Leaders will synthesize their own knowledge, skills, and traits within the circumstances in which they are placed, and there will not be a single method that eclipses the others. Successful leaders will be cognizant of the research, their own traits, and the institutional idiosyncrasies involved in delineating a successful transformation. Research suggests that open communication between administrators and stakeholders is a critical component in managing change (Baker et al., 1998; Grasmick, Davies, & Harbour, 2012; Jenkins & Jensen, 2010). Communication can be coupled with the first step of Kotter's (1996) change theory in communicating a sense of urgency, or stimulating action, to the stakeholders and community (Baker et al., 1998). Leading through shared governance can help dispel perceived shortcomings by stakeholders through a collaborative knowledge base (Baker et al., 1998; Grasmick, Davies, & Harbour, 2012; Jenkins & Jensen, 2010). Finally, incorporating leader-member exchange

theory (LMX) (Dienesch & Liden, 1986), college leaders can build upon the “in-group,” or subordinates that are more involved within the institution, as a means of inclusion and share governance. Leader-member exchange theory states that subordinates evolve into either one of two groups; the “in-group” and the “out-group.” The in-group tends to be more involved with direct leader or leaders and is therefore more inclined to work harder whereas the out-group is less “in touch” with direct leaders as well as their counter-cohort of the in-group and is less productive (Dienesch & Liden, 1986).

Presidential decision making. Abelman and Dalessandro (2008) have delineated many contemporary issues that have complicated decision making within the community college. They identified issues such as high enrollment, decreases in state funding, and increased demands for accountability is making community college administrator decision-making considerably more difficult during the last half decade than previously. Beckner (2004) suggested that community college leaders mostly do not ground their decision making in ethical or philosophical theory; rather, experiential knowledge tends to be the deciding factor in decision making practices. According to Wood and Hilton (2012), both ethical theory and practical knowledge should be employed in unison in order maintain ethical leadership.

Anderson and Davies (2000) prescribed a six-step decision making process to facilitate the most informed, objective, and ethical decisions made by community college presidents. The Anderson and Davies (2000) model includes the following steps for community college presidents to take when faced with difficult decisions: (1) identify the ethical dilemma, (2) gather facts, self-monitoring, and consulting, (3) ask important questions, (4) create alternate courses of action, (5) evaluate all alternatives, and (6)

implement the course of action. Oliver and Hioco (2012) have developed a systematic and reflective ethical and critical thinking decision making model for community college leaders which builds on, or can be used in conjunction with, the Anderson and Davies (2000) model. A recent catalyst that is included by Oliver and Hioco (2012) is that current and future administrators will need to make decisions in order to accomplish more with fewer resources than were previously available. Wood and Hilton (2012) have also built upon the Anderson and Davies (2000) model recently by developing an ethical paradigm framework to assist in creating alternative courses of action. This paradigm framework further assists community college leaders in performing ethical, objective, and sound decision making within their executive roles.

Kempner (2003) attempted to understand the leadership roles of contemporary community college leaders by interviewing prominent retired, community college leaders and founders. Kempner's exploration of early community college leadership showed a stronger reliance on autocratic, top-down leadership reminiscent of the junior college from which the community college arose from. Even with a top-down mentality, however, the community college presidents interviewed by Kempner still conveyed the importance of the institution in which they served as well as their capacities to incorporate input from all constituencies. Kempner's study shows a strong ethic, even from the beginnings of the community college, in which community college leaders aspire to maintain through their leadership style(s).

Summary

Higher education as a whole is facing financial turmoil unlike any other previously encountered. Decreased funding and increased enrollment are posing

significant challenges to already over encumbered institutions. The community college faces a unique opportunity in that it is relatively new to finding alternatives to the historical funding sources it has traditionally depended upon. With that naiveté comes the potential for using ambitious, pioneering means to gain resources waiting to be discovered. This review of the literature has highlighted examples of what community colleges are doing to alleviate the significant impact that decreased funding has had. This review has also discussed shortcomings of current methods, and presented alternative methodologies as a means of compensating for these deficiencies together with, leadership styles, and decision making tools with which community college leaders can, and have, employed to weather these tumultuous times.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this semi-structured qualitative study was to examine the decision making process(es) of community college presidents as related to resource allocation and the impact of these decisions on the comprehensive community college mission. The comprehensive mission of the community college includes providing: open access admission, a comprehensive curriculum, a student-centered learning environment, a community orientation to programming, and an economic development function (Vaughn, 2006).

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. What effect(s) has the decline of state funding for community colleges had on community college presidents' decision making process(es) and its impact on the comprehensive community college model?

2. What effect(s) has the increase of student enrollment at community colleges had on community college presidents' decision making process(es) and its impact on the comprehensive community college model?

The following chapter will discuss the methodology employed by this study.

Chapter 4 will convey the results while Chapter 5 will discuss conclusions along with recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the research design employed, the methodology, and the procedures. Multiple case studies will be the analytical framework employed to allow for emergent trends and themes while taking into account a variety of data sources and interpretation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of community college presidents related to the effect of declining state financial support and increased enrollment on the comprehensive mission of the community college. The study explored emerging themes through an analysis of presidents' perceptions in response to the semi-structured interview protocol established.

Context

This study examined the perspectives of community college presidents, and their respective institutions, throughout Arizona. The geographic region was chosen because of a gap in research in addition to the significant funding decreases higher educational institutions in Arizona have endured over the last five years. There are 20 public community colleges in Arizona; 10 are located within a single district, Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). Multiple case study qualitative inquiry was selected as the guiding methodological framework because the study sought to explore contemporary perceptions of Arizona community college leaders where there is no "in-depth understanding" available (Creswell, 2006; Hays & Singh, 2011). Data were collected via semi-structured interviews over a one month period during the Spring of 2013.

Participants

The target population for this study was community college presidents within Arizona. The criterion for selection of participants was individuals currently serving community college presidents at public community colleges in Arizona. Census sampling was employed to identify interviewees from within the population chosen (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, 2006). Purposeful sampling was used in order to ensure participants can provide an optimal level of information specific to the criteria involved (Hays & Singh, 2011; Patton, 2002). Participants were identified by the researcher through their respective institutional websites without regard for any other factors (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, etc.). Sample size was determined through thematic saturation. Participants were recruited until no new data emerged. All participants identified as community college president, meaning their responsibility is to act as chief executive officer of their institution. Participation was strictly voluntary.

Setting

The colleges represented within this study include public 2-year institutions with the highest degree available as an associate's degree. At the time of this writing, there were 20 community colleges within Arizona serving 135,789 FTSE in 2010 (Arizona Community Colleges, 2012). All interviews were conducted between May and June, 2013.

Instrumentation

The instrument employed was a researcher-developed, open-ended survey constructed in order to address each of the research questions. Because no existing instrument could be found to adequately assess the research questions, an instrument was

developed after a thorough review of the professional literature. The survey instrument was designed to garner a better understanding of community college presidents' perspectives in times of financial recession and increasing demand for services.

Data Collection Procedures

Letters to solicit participants (see Appendix A) that were identified as meeting the identified criteria were initially emailed. The email included an explanation of the study and the relevance of the topic. A statement of the voluntary nature of participating and an explanation of the confidentiality of the data provided were included. Potential participants who did not respond to the initial email were contacted via telephone to solicit participation.

A digital audio recorder was used, with consent, to record the conversations. Transcription of the audio recordings was conducted immediately after each interview. To protect confidentiality, data were analyzed in aggregate for emergent themes in relation to the interview questions. Interviews were scheduled to last one hour although the researcher was flexible in order to accommodate the presidents' schedules. Flexibility in this scheduling technique allowed for possible clarification and follow-up to emergent themes.

Analytic memo writing was employed as an additional data collection method. Memoing allowed for the capturing of thoughts and patterns and aided the researcher in the effort to continually making meaning of the data. Analytic memoing is an opportunity for the researcher to prompt her/himself for further reflection on possible deeper or more complex meaning to a datum (Saldaña, 2013). Analytic memoing was conducted throughout the data collection period as well as throughout the coding process as it

affords researcher reflexivity on the data corpus in order to better comprehend the actions, decisions, and assumptions have shaped the topic of the research (Saldaña, 2013). The memos were incorporated into the data and assisted to guide the final coding process.

Interview method. Data were collected by asking researcher-developed questions in a guided interview format. The questions addressed the interview question categories as delineated below. The interview technique employed was a semi-structured interview. The semi-structured method allows for flexibility in the interview process which can accommodate new, or previously unidentified, themes. The researcher approached the interviews with specific topics, themes, and questions but allowed the discussion to progress as a natural conversation. The interview protocol (below) assisted the researcher in his effort to stay within topics.

In-person interviews were used because of the depth and meaning of the context that can be obtained. Gaining insight and understanding is the priority in face-to-face interviews (Gillham, 2000). This approach was employed to allow for thoughtful, open-ended participation. Also, this approach allowed participants to discuss the topics in depth. The same series of open-ended interview questions were asked of all participants. By employing open-ended questions and allowing the topical trajectory to detour, offers the opportunity for identifying new depth and meaning to the topic as well as the ability to explore newly identified themes. Additionally, the researcher used prompts (e.g., “tell me more...”), where appropriate, in order to promote participant engagement to topics deemed new or meaningful as they arose.

Consideration of Human Subjects

The identity of all participants will remain confidential. Only the information obtained through direct interviews will be used in this study. All information was recorded in a manner in which participants will not be identifiable. The recordings of all interviews will be saved, via password protection on the researcher's computer, for three years to enhance credibility. After three years the recordings will then be destroyed.

There were no identified risks by participating in this study. All actions have been taken to uphold participant confidentiality. Full participant disclosure was communicated to participants as there was no determined need to withhold information for the intents and purposes of this study. No sensitive information was solicited by the study (e.g., illegal behavior, substance abuse). A comprehensive informed consent form was employed to disclose all pertinent information to prospective participants beforehand (see Appendix E).

Interview Protocol

An interview protocol was designed to elicit thoughtful responses from the participants regarding the phenomena being studied. The interview questions were designed to explore the commonalities, best-practices, pitfalls, etc. during times of economic crisis and increased enrollments (see Table 3.1). Multiple expert review was employed in order to strengthen efficacy of the interview questions. Every effort was made by the researcher to confirm comments and themes without leading or guiding the participant. A pilot interview was conducted to test the strength of the instrument. No adjustments were made to the protocol in response to the pilot interview. Participants were prompted to elaborate and/or provide examples of comments and themes that the

researcher felt were important emergent concepts. Researcher review of the elicited responses was conducted in order to measure whether the questions were accurately asking what was intended.

Table 3.1

Interview Protocol Basis

Topic	Question	Based on
Comprehensive Community College Mission	3, 11, 13	(Baker, 1994; El-Khawas, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski et al., 2011; Vaughan, 1985)
Decision Making	3, 4, 5, 6, 13	(Abelman & Dalessandro, 2008; Anderson and Davies, 2000; Beckner, 2004; Kempner, 2003; Wood & Hilton, 2012)
Decreased Funding for Community Colleges	1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 13	(Carter, 2011; Chabotar, 2010; Harbour, 2009; Hearn, 2003; Holley & Harris, 2010; Joch, 2011; Jones & Wellman, 2010; Kelderman, 2010; McMillen 2010; Moltz, 2009; Mullin & Honeyman, 2007; Wagoner & Besikof, 2011)
Fundraising	7, 8	(Carter, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Joch, 2011; McMillen 2010; Moltz, 2009; Mullin & Honeyman, 2007)
Active Participation	9	(Duncan & Ball, 2011; Friedel, 2010; Markham, 2008; McMillen, 2011; C. Murray, 2009; J. Murray, 2009)
Partnerships	10	(Carr, 2009; Esters et al., 2008; Garcia, 2009; Roueche & Jones, 2005; Voogt, 2009)
Increased Enrollment	2, 3, 4, 11, 13	(Baime, 2011; Edelson 2009; Jurgens, 2010; Mullin & Phillippe, 2009)
Leadership Characteristics	6, 12	(Plinske & Packard, 2010; Tschechtelin, 2011)
Organizational Change	13	(Baker et al., 1998; Cummings, 1999; Grasmick, Davies, & Harbour, 2012; Jenkins & Jensen, 2010; Kotter, 1996; Malm, 2008; State Higher Education Executive Officers [SHEEO], 2011; Yukl, 2002)

Interview question categories. The interview questions were formulated through a thorough review of the professional literature.

Comprehensive community college mission. The questions in this category attempted to understand the participants' perspectives regarding the comprehensive mission of the community college (Vaughn, 2006) and areas where the comprehensive mission may be violated in order to make accommodations due to a budget shortfall (Duncan & Ball, 2011; El-Khawas, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski et al., 2011).

Decision making. Questions in this category sought to understand what, if any, method(s) have been employed by community college leaders when making difficult decisions (Beckner, 2004; Kempner, 2003; Wood & Hilton, 2012).

Decreased funding for community colleges. These questions explored the funding method(s) employed by the representative institutions (Mullin & Honeyman, 2007). This category also sought to understand any successful or unsuccessful alternative methods being employed (Carter, 2011; Markham, 2008; Stevenson, 2001).

Fundraising. This category sought to understand which fundraising methods have been recently employed by community colleges (Carter, 2011; Hearn, 2003; Markham, 2008; Ryan & Palmer, 2005). Additionally, what role(s) have community college leaders taken in fundraising (Carter, 2011; McGee, 2003; Wagoner & Besikof, 2011).

Active participation. Participation by community colleges and community college leaders in attempting to vie for state and federal funding through active participation were sought through the questions in this category (Duncan & Ball, 2011; Friedel, 2010; Markham, 2008; McMillen, 2011; C. Murray, 2009; J. Murray, 2009).

Partnerships. The exploration of the entrepreneurial efforts being employed by community colleges as an effort to offset expenses and manage increased enrollments

was investigated (Carr, 2009; Esters et al., 2008; Garcia, 2009; Roueche & Jones, 2005; Voogt, 2009).

Decreased enrollment. Understanding enrollment issues as well as how these issues have been confronted during times of budget decreases were addressed by this category of questions (Eggins & West, 2010; Holley & Harris, 2010; Maslin-Ostrowski, Floyd, & Hrabak, 2011; Murray & Orr, 2011).

Leadership characteristics. This category explored the common (or uncommon) characteristics of each community college leader (AACC, 2012; Plinske & Packard, 2010; Tschechtelin, 2011).

Organizational change. Finally, the questions in this category explored how community college leaders have endured and enacted change within their institutions (Kotter, 1996; Malm, 2008; McKinney & Morris, 2010). Additionally, which methods have been employed as a means to enact said change will be examined (Baker et al., 1998; Grasmick, Davies, & Harbour, 2012; Jenkins & Jensen, 2010; Kotter, 1996; Yukl, 2002).

Data Analysis

The multiple case study qualitative tradition was the overarching method of analysis. Stake (1995) outlined four categories of data analysis within the case study tradition: (1) employ a broad examination of the issues within the data collected; (2) singularly interpret issues within the data without considering other aspects or data; (3) making patterns of the data collected by using the first and second categories; and (4) making sense of the data in a way that can make it comprehensible toward the intended audience. Creswell (2006) built upon Stake's (1995) method by adding two additional

categories of data analysis: (1) take into consideration the chronology of events within the data; (2) build a case description in order to fully convey a more “full picture.”

Digital recordings of the interviews were transcribed and reviewed to explore emerging patterns, trends, and themes. The researcher undertook a 5-step analytical review process that included: (1) transcripts were reviewed for obvious emergent themes; (2) coding was conducted; (3) notes, coding, memos, and journals were reviewed for consistencies and contrasts; (4) emergent themes were synthesized via all the data sources; and (5) themes were compared to the interview questions for theory construction.

Coding. Data were coded through multiple analytic methods. This was intentional in order to more fully understand the cases being explored as well as to lend to stronger validity to the interpretation of data. Deductive analysis was used by coding data through provisional methods prescribed beforehand in order to best align with the conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2013). Data were then coded through inductive generative analysis to allow the researcher to create categories as they became evident (Patton, 2002; Saldaña, 2013). The first cycle of coding employed methods toward data management and “whole picture” overviews. First cycle coding methods were employed to attune the researcher to the participant language and perspectives (Saldaña, 2013). Recurring regularities were identified initially through the first cycle coding process.

Second cycle coding methods were then used in order to categorize and synthesize emergent themes which were then identified through the clustering of larger themes of regularities (Saldaña, 2013). Intra-rater reliability was established by coding and re-coding transcripts. The coding structure underwent revision as themes emerged or

stagnated. Open coding along with the iterative nature of qualitative inquiry offers initial flexibility with emergent themes as well as allowing for the possibility of theme connections. Both hierarchical and topological relational strategies were employed during data analysis. These frameworks allowed for relationship identification between and among themes. Other relational strategies were reviewed as an alternative methodological triangulation for data analysis. Qualitative strategy suggests to ask questions first and then to explore answers within the data. Data analysis allowed for theory construction to occur during and after all data have been retrieved.

According to Merriam (2009), qualitative analyses and data collection occur simultaneously. So too, did they occur within this study. The researcher reflected upon this study, via journaling and analytic memoing, during all stages of the study as a method of making meaning of the numerous data to be collected. By not continually reflecting and making sense of data in real time, the qualitative researcher jeopardizes the entirety of the study by possibly overlooking important data and/or findings (Merriam, 2009).

Credibility

Many procedures were employed in order to maintain validity. Data triangulation was employed by collecting data from multiple sources throughout Arizona. The researcher also maintained an audit trail of observation notes, journals, calendars, records, public information retrieved, and maintaining audio files for three years. Journals were maintained for recording researcher thoughts, ideas, and biases as well in order to identify any researcher reflexivity. Furthermore, thick and rich description was provided as another method of maintaining credibility. Data triangulation, identifying researcher

reflexivity, providing a rich and thick description of the setting, context, and perspectives, peer review, and, finally, maintaining an audit trail all maximize the reliability and validity of the findings of this study.

Validity. In order to establish content validity, a panel of experts was assembled and asked to review and critique the instrument (Kumar, 2005). A pilot study was conducted in order to assess instrument reliability as well as to solidify content validity. The pilot study tested the instrument, procedures, and methods. The pilot study was conducted using a community college president. This pilot study was employed to identify possible changes in the instrument and interview process.

Limitations

While this study has attempted to garner participation from a significant portion of Arizona community college presidents, participation was voluntary; and given the inherent time constraints of the position being examined, a low response rate was anticipated. One method to prevent this limitation included the use of follow-up correspondence with non-respondents based on the methods outlined by Dillman (2007). The final limitation includes desirability bias (Crowne & Marlowe, 1966), wherein respondents may answer the questions so that they may be viewed favorably by others. All efforts were made by the researcher to encourage candid participation by emphasizing the confidentiality of the process.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of community college leadership and vision within times of crisis(es). This study employed a multiple case-studies qualitative analysis to assess community college presidents' perspectives, decision-making, and best

practices used during times of crisis(es). The population included community college presidents within Arizona. Data were obtained through personal interviews. Furthermore, data were coded and analyzed in aggregate to protect anonymity.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of community college regarding the effect of declining state financial support and increased enrollments on the comprehensive mission of the community college.

Chapter IV will discuss the results of this study. Chapter V will discuss conclusions made regarding this study as well as propose ideas for further research.

Chapter IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the decision making process(es) of community college presidents as related to resource allocation and the impact of these decisions on the comprehensive community college mission. The comprehensive mission of the community college includes providing: open access admission, a comprehensive curriculum, a student-centered learning environment, a community orientation to programming, and an economic development function (Vaughn, 2006).

The Arizona community college system consists of twenty public community colleges. Ten of the community colleges reside within Maricopa County and are part of the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD). This district serves nearly half of the total Arizona full-time student equivalent (FTSE) (Arizona Community Colleges, 2013; Maricopa Community Colleges, 2012). This study investigated Arizona community college presidents' perspectives of resource allocation, decision-making, enrollment, and the comprehensive community college mission in relation to the Great Recession.

Demographic Analysis

The six participants interviewed for this study served as presidents of either MCCCD community colleges, or individual districts. They equally represented the MCCCD (50 percent) and non-MCCCD districts (50 percent). Of the six participants in this study, two were female (33.3 percent) and four were male (67.7 percent).

Institution type. Participants equally represented institutions from rural, urban, and suburban locales. Table 4.1 reports the distribution of institution type represented by participants.

Table 4.1

Distribution of Institution Type Represented

Years	Number	Percent
Urban	2	33.3
Suburban	2	33.3
Rural	2	33.3

Experience. Participants had varying levels of experience in their current roles. Participants were grouped into three categories determined by the amount of time they have been president at their college. The three categories describing participants' time served as president of their current institution included 1-3 years (33.3 percent), 4-6 years (50 percent), and 7-10 years (16.7 percent). Table 4.2 reports the distribution of years as current president of their community college.

Table 4.2

Years as President of Current Community College

Years	Number	Percent
1 - 3	2	33.3
4 - 6	3	50
7 - 10	1	16.7

Themes were grouped according to the interview question topics delineated in Chapter 3 (see Table 3.1).

Decreased Funding

The interview questions inquiring about decreased state funding elicited a spectrum of responses. The larger, more urban-based institutions had less concern toward state budget cuts while smaller and more rural institutions seemed to have had a significantly tougher time. R3, who heads a smaller institution stated that, "it seems as

though we have found a new basement, and this is where we are going to be living for a while” when it came to the institutional budget for the next couple of years. Arizona community colleges have lost a substantial amount of state-based funding which came through a variety of forms (Tschechtelin, 2011). First, capital outlay funding was eliminated completely, and then Adult Basic Education was also cut. The community colleges, which had a significant focus on workforce and/or adult basic education, were experiencing high enrollments and were counting on those funds which R1 simply stated that it, “significantly impacted us.” Many of the presidents seemed astonished when discussing the cuts made by the state. There was an unspoken bewilderment amongst participants as they reflected back to the more significant cuts. R2, when discussing the elimination of capital outlay funding, almost puzzlingly shared that the state, “had never done that before.” R3 gave a good first-hand account of the cuts to Arizona community colleges: “I think it was ten percent the first time [first budget cut]. Then we had something called capital outlay funding, which was cut. And then, I forget what year it was, they made a very significant cut, and the average was about forty-eight percent across the board. Some were cut eighty-something percent; others were cut like two or three percent. It was an unfair way to do it, across the board, but they thought it was fair.” All of the participants seemed to maintain a positive and upbeat mentality when discussing this apparently difficult time with which they had endured. The experience, it would seem, has made the participants stronger albeit, not without going through some significant transformation, both internally and institutionally. Some participants would even go as far to suggest that they are better off now because of the lows that they were forced to endure.

Increased Enrollment

When prompted to discuss whether their institution had seen increased enrollments during the Great Recession, all of the presidents unanimously responded positively. The period of 2007 to 2011 seemed to generate the largest enrollment increases, with mid-2010 being the peak according to the participants. R3 recalled that, “back in 2007, we were experiencing double digit growth, and we did that for about four to four and a half years.” R4, similarly shared, “there was dramatic increases [that gave us] double digit enrollment growth every year for about three years.” R1’s institution surpassed that, “with twenty six to twenty seven percent enrollment increases”. R1 proudly expressed that, “in the *Community College Times*... we were the fastest growing community college in America.” R1 went on to explain, “so, what we saw was from the downturn of the economy, many people are returning to school. This is ordinary for community colleges to go through this cycle.” Other participants’ institutions saw significant enrollment increases also, although not as dramatic as R1’s institution. The respondents accurately depict the data which corroborates this growth period which showed a 9.7% FTSE increase just between 2010 to 2011 in Arizona (State of Arizona, 2011). The three to four year period of enrollment growth was a positive moment during most of the conversations. All of the participants reflected how that, even though budgetary constraints were significantly impacting their institutions, the increased enrollments were a significant impression on their campuses. The responses to prompts regarding increased enrollment showed an underlying yearning by most participants to be able to positively impact more students than they normally would. This impression

suggests a strong intrinsic motivation by community college leaders to build up a community via their institutions.

Comprehensive Community College Mission

With enrollments rising and state aid decreasing, I sought to learn whether the comprehensive community college mission would be compromised. The comprehensive community college mission consists of open-access, equity, comprehensive educational offerings, community service, economic development, and lifelong learning (Baker, 1994; Vaughan, 1985). The participants' responses, although varied, summarized their support of the comprehensive mission, as well as unearthed their doubts regarding the ability to accomplish the mission in its entirety if economic and enrollment hardships continue.

Participants had a number of ways of expressing a relatively overarching premise regarding how their institutions have sustained economically while still carrying out the comprehensive mission of the community college. R1 explained how his institution continues to, "cut around the edges... [and that] we are not impacting programs, and we are not impacting people yet." R1 would go on to state that, "while other institutions are using a sledgehammer, [his institution] is using a scalpel" in order to decrease the excess, yet still remain a comprehensive community college. R1 likened this idea to, "tightening up our belt a little bit... [by] cutting back on Saturday hours...and holiday hours... anywhere else we could cut, where we wouldn't have to provide certain services and that were not impactful to students." R2 and R3, while using different wording, explained similarly how their colleges are responding. R2 said that his institution is, "going through a district-wide prioritization process... where each program will go through a mini

program review.” R2’s institution will be, “carefully looking at programs that are expensive, high-cost, low-impact, low-enrollment kinds of things.” R3 gave a more philosophical perspective regarding the community college mission, “the mission is the mission. It is in good times and it is in bad. When that mission was created, we decided how we wanted to serve our community, and it's just a matter of the scalability of that mission, how much of it we do, but we are going to do all of it.” Most of the presidents followed this notion of scalability when it came to the comprehensive mission. All but one president explained how their institutions would “cut the fat” or “re-prioritize” or “re-allocate” as a method of holding true to the comprehensive mission in times of hardship.

Each of the participants’ institutions have faced circumstances which threatened the comprehensive community college. For example, during peak enrollment, R2 explained how, “we actually ran out of space; parking space, classroom space. So we began looking then at alternative ways to deliver instruction. It wasn't so much of a resource issue, in other words, it wasn't that we didn't have enough money to hire adjunct faculty-we ran out of space.” R4 explained her institution simply couldn’t afford to sustain the mission and that, “we have had to cut programs, cut classes, cut positions... [and] if it continues, we will have to talk about changing missions of the institution.” R4 was the sole outlier for this theme though.

While most of the presidents mentioned their stance on remaining true to the comprehensive community college mission, many expressed their doubts about its’ feasibility if times continue to remain tough. R2 stated, “while we haven’t had to discontinue an entire program, we are getting prepared to do that, moving forward.” R1

held a similar view when discussing the future of his institution as well as community colleges generally. R1 gave his view of how community colleges will respond if times continue to remain tough by stating that, “community colleges can't continue to be all things to all people... so, what I would say is that the whole system of community colleges is working on not duplicating programming, prioritizing, meaning that low enrollment classes we won't go with as much anymore.” R1 would go on to give an analogy of how community colleges have historically operated as “silos” and that they need to work collaboratively in order to sustain the comprehensive mission as well as remain afloat, but that, “there is no way that every community college is going to be able to be comprehensive anymore. We are going to have to be able to leverage off restraints.”

The comprehensive mission of the community college, a “seminal beacon” of modern higher education (Levin et al., 1998), is on the proverbial chopping block (Harbour, 2009; Murray & Orr, 2011; Vitullo & Johnson, 2010). The responses elicited showed a hesitancy toward compromising the mission, but if economic strain continues, presidents conveyed their willingness to detour from the mission in order to sustain.

Decision Making

The research questions undergirding this study sought to investigate if increased enrollments, decreased funding, and presidential tenure have impacted presidential decision-making. Most of the participants explained that their decision-making has changed as a result of the aforementioned catalysts.

Most presidents expressed a strong demand for data and supporting information prior to making decisions. R2 described that he is, “much hungrier for data and

information... [and that he is] much more deliberative in getting multiple inputs, and triangulating decision-making.”

In addition to a more informed decision-making process, participants also expressed the importance of participatory decision-making. R3 explained that, coming from private industry he learned quickly that, “shared governance is a very significant requirement of how you operate the institution. So, I had to adjust my way of thinking in terms of how to make decisions.” R2 explained the importance of participatory decision-making, “certainly involves the right kinds of people... but that you can't, as a college president, delegate those harder decisions,” R2 continued to explain that, “believe me, when things go well, the president gets credit, but when things do not go well, guess who comes looking for me? And rightly so.” R4 contrasted the other participants when it came to shared governance and participatory decision-making. R4 stated that, “when it comes to the significance of this decline in such a short period of time, I guess I became more direct in my decision making, and less inclusive.” R4 went on to elaborate that, “ultimately, it is the CEO's responsibility to make sure the ship keeps moving (laughs). There wasn't time to get everybody up to speed on all the intricacies, and two, like I said, it's ultimately my responsibility, and that is not the time for small little change. It's the time for big change, and some of those decisions, like cutting staff and cutting positions, are really not a communal conversation.” Edelson (2009) suggests that involving campus constituents in decision making, the institutional effort will result in a stronger commitment to the institution. Most respondents shared this commonality regarding the way in which they handle important decisions which appears to be a strong practice that can increase the strength of an institution.

Another commonality among participant responses was the term “return on investment” (ROI). Although similar to the common usage of this phrase in business, the participants’ responses were more of a general view on returns and not formulaic. A more holistic meaning of ROI seems to be how the participants used this term. For example, R2 brought up ROI when discussing informed decision-making, “always start[s] with the end in mind... how does this decision impact the core aspect of our vision or mission... the college?” and continued, “things that the business world has been doing for years, we are just now beginning to do.”

R3 discussed his appreciation for the results of the economic downturn because of the amount of focus that the constituents of the college now have on his decision-making and that of his leadership team. R3 reflected, “I think it has really opened up the institution for broader vision to what goes into making a decision... and so, how it affected our decision-making is that more people understand, really now, how decisions are made.”

Decision making amongst participants seemed to strongly align with the literature discussed in Chapter 2. There was a strong impression that participants have effectively integrated the importance of incorporating experiential knowledge (Beckner, 2004) and theoretical knowledge (Hilton, 2012) while still adhering to the Anderson and Davies (2000) model of informed decision making. There appears to be a very fine line which participants must walk in order to sustain their role as a decision maker, while still being participatory and inclusive.

Alternative Funding

A number of methods were conveyed by participants when prompted to describe what, if any, alternative funding methods they have employed as a result of decreased state funding. Notable commonalities amongst participants included many of the methods already described in Chapter 2. The more traditional route of reorganization and reallocation (mentioned above) was mentioned by all participants as one approach for making existing funding stretch. A few original methods were mentioned that participants' institutions have been employing as well. Anecdotally, R4 responded that, "we've increased tuition again."

Fundraising. According to Wagoner and Besikof (2011), fundraising is one of the best methods for ensuring decreased state revenue does not transfer to increased costs for students. Each participant mentioned fundraising as a practice that has increased on their campus since the recession. R2 mentioned the plight of community college fundraising in comparison to 4-year institutions, "we are somewhat playing 'catch-up' in terms of the role that philanthropy has played at our school... I mean, we've only had a full time person in development for a little over five years, and even then, this individual only has half time for raising money." According to Lanning (2008), community colleges account for just two percent of all higher education charitable fund-giving which shows the amount of "catch-up" needed by community colleges. R3 described his institution's pursuit of donors which ended up being a boon for the college, "we were able to build two buildings by finding a donor during this recession. A building that we needed, so we went out and recruited...we never would have built the buildings without them, that's for sure." R4 corroborated R2's response by stating, "our foundation has certainly ramped up its function [as a result of the recession]." While fundraising was reported as by all

participants, the amount of time and effort to which institutions devoted to this strategy was surprisingly low. Ryan and Palmer (2005) suggest that locale can negatively impact the effect of fundraising efforts. Locale appeared to not be a factor in this study as institutions from urban, suburban, and rural locations collectively fared low in their attempts to obtain, and receive, philanthropic funding. Participants all recognized the importance of this method, but were all reserved in the amount of time and resources with which they allowed toward this. Similarly, like the need to go to the dentist, you know you need to do it, but you simply keep putting it off. So, too, was the act of fundraising amongst participants.

Active participation. “[Community college p]residents need to be better than ever before in making the case for support at the local, state, and federal governmental levels (Duncan & Ball, 2011, p.61).”

All participants were prompted for their level of involvement in lobbying for state and federal governments. The responses ranged from no participation, to full involvement at both federal and state levels. R3 explained his rationale for not reaching out to federal and state legislatures, “from the standpoint of trying to find new money, I wasn't going to waste my time trying to squeeze blood out of a turnip down at the legislature, because there wasn't any blood left, there were barely any turnips left!” but went on to say, “I respect the job that those folks do, and understand that there are five million people trying to go after all the money, and they are all down there, hundreds of them trying to get the money for these five million people. It is a matter of prioritization. There are some agencies in the state that have been cut far more severely than we have been. It's just a matter of accepting the situation – there is no money. So it doesn't do any good to go

down there and beg for something that does not exist. Quite frankly, my time is more valuable than to go down there and talk to people all day long about things, when in fact, I can send it to them and they can read it, or not.”

R1 describes the benefits of being part of the MCCCCD, “The lobbyists for this system [MCCCCD], because we are one of the ten colleges, are working to get capital funding back...or to get special appropriations for job training dollars that allow the colleges to qualify for more of the state's dollars that are targeted for job training.” R1 explains how important employing lobbyists full time is, “In Washington, we have lobbyists that serve the district that help me as well, mostly playing defense, meaning first of all, on the Pell Grant... and any rules coming out of U.S.D.O. E. [United States Department of Education] affecting online, and any amendments... like, there is a set of amendments that would have reduced any student taking courses online from qualifying to take the Cost of Living adjustment, and financial aid, they wouldn't qualify for it.... So yes, we have our lobbyists busily working to increase appropriations in order to qualify for other sources of revenue, and playing defense on more mandates, and types of issues that affect us.” R2, also a member of the MCCCCD, in describing state lobbying, said, “I think that for the first time, in the state of Arizona, all ten colleges and all ten college districts have gotten together and developed a single platform of our three goals that colleges have... [and that] has the potential to make a more significant difference in tight economic times than all the ten colleges going out there by themselves.” R1 and R2 show the importance of what Friedel (2010) stated in that community colleges can form alliances to work toward a common cause as being part of the MCCCCD.

Similarly to the stubbornness, or hesitancy toward committing an institution to fundraising mentioned above, participants recognized the need for government participation (lobbying) but not all were inclined to commit to this. Some presidents held a strong opinion about the inability to obtain funds through lobbying, while other presidents were currently, successfully, working on obtaining alternative funding. There seems to be a “hard-headedness” that sometimes accompanies the role of community college leader. There is direct evidence from peers that lobbying is being done to successfully obtain alternative funding, yet some presidents just stomp their feet and say no.

Partnerships. A popular method of offsetting decreased funding is to engage in partnerships with local businesses. Engaging with local business and industry can be a significant method of offsetting a majority of expense by a community college (Roueche & Jones, 2005; Voogt, 2009). Each of the participants explained how their institutions have sought out these partnerships, or in a couple of cases avoided them altogether.

A common theme among all of the participants’ institutions was the impact of the economic downturn on local business. In the more rural locales, “there are not a lot of large businesses that we can capitalize on here or develop any kind of specialized program for a company,” R3 explained, who went on to share, “there are so many businesses that are now out of business, or struggling so badly, they don't have the funding or the opportunity for growing their businesses, because their revenues are so far down.” But, as R4 explained, “that's [taking on partnerships] what a community college does, anyway. Part of what we are all about, regardless of whether or not we are in a recession, is partnering with business and industry and other groups.”

R1's institution was the outlier in this theme. Because of the large size of R1's institution, R1 explained, "good partners are harder to come by. It's hard to partner, and hard to make partnerships work very well, because everyone has their own unique interests. It doesn't mean that you can't do well doing it. A lot of partnerships are based on goodwill, and those are great, because community colleges are variable and provide programming for the community. But if it is for the purpose of making money... those are harder... we get calls a lot to see if we want to share revenues, tuition revenues, and go after certain markets and that kind of thing, but we are strapped pretty tight right now."

Surprisingly, this method was not as all-encompassing as the review of literature in Chapter 2 suggested. There is acknowledgement that entrepreneurial thinking and activity is necessary by community colleges in order to sustain economic downturns, yet the results of this study suggest that the application still lags behind the theory.

Miscellaneous methods. There are a variety of other means which participants are employing in order to help offset decreased state funding. R1, for example, is president of a predominantly online institution and has found a way to scale resources so that other institutions can employ those via contracts for which institutions pay R1's school for the use of those resources. R1 explains, "they [institutions] access it from us, and sometimes we use our instructors and sometimes we use theirs... but, because the more customization that a client wants, the more expensive it is" which has prevented R1's institution from scaling this out even larger than it already is. R1 also explained how his institution is marketing the institution throughout the country, especially in California where, "they have so many hundreds of thousands of people who are going without service because of their budget and their situation, and we have capacity on our system."

Another method which a few participants mentioned was seeking out grants. R2 explained his institution's approach, "[although] we have relatively limited grant proposal writing on our campus, we have done very well in early childhood education... we probably wrote proposals that netted approximately 750 to 800 thousand dollars' worth of programs last year. We [also] had a couple of small S.T.E.M. [science, technology, engineering, and mathematics] grants we wrote for and received."

R4 sought funding via amending the local property tax levy as a result of decreased state aid. "We have looked into going to a ballot initiative locally for a property tax override, on a secondary property tax. We've talked with legislators about an amendment to statute to allow the voters of our county to recalibrate their primary property tax rate."

That there is no perfect alternative to subsidizing decreased state funding appears to be the take-away from this study. Each institution appeared to be seeking out methods that best fit their institution. What works for one institution could be completely impossible for another institution to attempt.

Characteristics

The AACC (2012) reported that community college leadership is dynamic and fluid which will result in shifts of competencies based on contemporary demand. Participants were prompted to describe the characteristics that they believed to be the most important for success as a president of a twenty-first century community college. Many characteristics were mentioned by all participants as being important. Most of the characteristics shared by participants were grouped into themes. This section will report the major themes identified.

Table 4.3 shows the characteristics deemed important for success by presidents of community colleges interviewed for this study. One characteristic stood out above all of the characteristics mentioned - tenacity. Tenacity, and/or courage of one's convictions, was described by all participants, in a variety of ways. For example, R1 and R4 referred to needing "courage," while R2 and R3 mentioned needing "tenacity, thick skin, and a backbone." R5 described the importance of having "grit." Ultimately, participants expressed the need to be strong, courageous, and resilient in good times and bad. R2 explained that, "you have to develop thick skin because you make some decisions that are unpopular. You have to ask questions that are unpopular. You have to challenge the status quo, which is unpopular. So, you have to develop that backbone and thickness of skin. When you make a decision, you have to follow through on that decision. You can't waiver, or be wishy-washy, in terms of making hard decisions." R1 stated that, "you have to have courage to make the right decisions... for the good of the college."

Table 4.3

Important Characteristics to Possess as a Community College President

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Tenacity	6	100
Patience	4	66.7
Good Communicator	4	66.7
Communicate Often	3	50
Optimistic	2	33.3
Problem Solver	2	33.3

Another characteristic, or skill, that was reported often was communication. In fact, there were two variations of communication skills that were mentioned by at least half of all the participants; (a) being a good communicator and (b) communicating often. Most participants expressed the importance of being able to communicate effectively and

at all levels in order to be successful in this role. R5 stated this simply that, “you could be a genius... but if you can’t communicate, then that’s a problem.” R1 explains further, “You have to be very articulate as to why you make the decisions you do. You really have to be a good communicator and you communicate often, too. I think that is really important. As a leader, people expect you to make decisions and communicate with them about what is the real deal, or what are we dealing with here?” R3 succinctly stated, “...changes are going to be made. The fact is people need to understand why” which is what prompted him to vocalize the importance of open communication.

In addition to being a good communicator and communicating effectively, another characteristic mentioned by a majority of participants was patience. R1 explained, “you have to make decisions at the right time. You don’t always have to make a decision, you can take your time in making that, and I... understand it very well now. If you need time, and you have time, take the time.” R1 also stated that, “you have to take the time to see how things are going to develop. Not react too quickly until you figure out what your options are.” R3 explained how good communication and, “that you have to be patient with people, to take the time to explain why you made a decision.”

Other characteristics mentioned complement those already mentioned. For example, a few participants expressed the importance of being optimistic, confident, and a “cheerleader” for the institution. R1 explained, “you have to be a cheerleader... you also have to be optimistic about the future.” Another characteristic that builds on this was the characteristic of, as R6 put it, “surrounding yourself with competent people.” Furthermore, as R2 stated, “you have to be confident enough in your ability as a leader to invite people who you know disagree with you to the table, so that you get those

disagreements out there, on the front end, and bring those people forward who you know will oppose you.”

There were quite a few characteristics that seemed appropriate and were complimentary to the role of a community college president. The manner in which participants responded to these particular prompts was noteworthy. Some participants responded in third-person, or as a discussion of qualities that potential or current leaders should have whereas other participants responded strictly from the first-person perspective. Those that responded with over-arching characteristics needed in order to be a good community college leader tended to include more generalizable qualities that most people can relate to. The first-person respondents tended to include specific characteristics that may, or may not, be beneficial for other leaders, such as: “going on vacation” as one respondent reported or “being persuasive” as another respondent reported.

Organizational Change

This final theme was prompted by questions seeking information describing how participants’ institution’s changed as a result of the dueling pressures of decreased funding and increased enrollments. R5 admitted, “I think we are much stronger now... from a financial perspective and our strategic planning. From an institutional culture perspective, we have grown tremendously.” Similarly, R3 shared that, “we got more purposeful... we got more purposeful in our deliberations which has resulted in a better allocation of resources.” R2 shared a similar perspective that, “it’s made us smarter. It’s made us more focused and it has made us be true to the core mission of the institution, which are not bad things.”

While the prompts sought to produce information describing how their institutions have changed, participants tended to not just include their institution in their responses. Being a community college leader seemed to give participants a feeling of being a part of the greater community in which they serve. For example, R4 explained, “our workforce is smaller. We have had to eliminate services, and eliminate some of our programs, so we are not serving the community in the fullest way possible, which is, again, what a community college is supposed to do. There have been needs in our community that have come up in the last five years, programmatic needs, that we have not been able to meet, like manufacturing program, robotics...”

R1 gave an excellent prophetic perspective of how he views his institution, and the institution of the community college as a whole, in light of the changes that have resulted because of the Great Recession: “the one thing that we have to get used to is just the constant of change. But I think now the new normal is really going to be a lot more wondering, and there's going to be a lot less that is predictable. We are going to have to understand that that is the new normal. We're going to have to be agile, and it's going to test our leadership.”

R1's response was a great summation of the multitude of variation to the prompts for this study. There is no certainty any longer within the community college. Malm (2008) suggested that there is no specific characteristic which is critical for leaders to exude during change and it will be up to the leader to forge a unique path to success. Each participant would share this in one way or another throughout the entirety of this study. The constant of change was not assimilated easily though, and some participants exuded strong reservations in their capacity to sustain if the current situation remains. I

liken this to a toddler dragging her feet from the house to the car when trying to go somewhere. Other participants recognize this new normal and have taken pre-emptive actions for the betterment of their institutions as a result of the recent economic climate. The strongest of the institutions reviewed in this study had a strong sense of collaboration, inclusion, and open-mindedness which may, or may not, have been some of the reasons why they were still financially and organizationally strong. Less-endowed institutions are going to have to learn to acclimate to these new norms or else their struggles will continue.

Chapter 5 will discuss the results explained within this chapter along with providing recommendations on how to apply this study as well as recommendations for further research.

Chapter V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a summary of the study accompanied by conclusions drawn from the data described in Chapter 4. I will provide a discussion of the implications for employing this information along with recommendations for further research and application by practitioners.

Community colleges provide a beneficial service to their communities including open access, lifelong learning, and workforce preparation. With decreasing funds and increasing demands for services, community colleges are left with the same expectations of continuing to provide these services, while running on significantly lower budgets. Arizona community colleges are facing some of the largest budget reductions within the United States. Many college leaders question whether the traditional comprehensive mission of the community college is sustainable (El-Khawas, 2011).

Alternative income streams are a crucial mechanism to help keep these community colleges functioning. Alternative income streams can aid in offsetting decreasing traditional revenue streams such as that of state revenue. Examples of alternative revenues include philanthropic fundraising and partnerships. While community colleges have worked diligently to become efficient stewards of taxpayer funds and to streamline wherever possible, they have had to raise tuition as the primary response to maintaining a comprehensive mission in the face of severe reductions in state allocations, a practice which is not sustainable.

Declining state funding is one of the most pressing issues facing community college leaders today (D'Amico, Katsinas, & Friedel, 2012). Coupled with declining state funding, increased enrollments have exacerbated the problem faced by community

college leaders (Eggins & West, 2010; Holley & Harris, 2010; Maslin-Ostrowski, Floyd, & Hrabak, 2011; Murray & Orr, 2011). These contradicting crises have challenged the feasibility of sustaining the comprehensive community college mission (El-Khawas, 2011; Harbour, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski et al., 2011). Critical tenets of the comprehensive community college, such as open access, economic development, and a comprehensive curriculum are all facing significant reductions or even elimination because of these “perfect storm” events (Harbour, 2009; Murray & Orr, 2011; Vitullo & Johnson, 2010).

The purpose of this semi-structured qualitative study was to examine the decision making process(es) of community college presidents as related to resource allocation and the impact of these decisions on the comprehensive community college mission.

Chapter 2 of this study explored the contemporary literature in order to gain an understanding of the coincidental crises of decreased state funding and enrollment increases for community colleges, and more specifically, Arizona community colleges. This context revealed various studies related to how community colleges are attempting to offset this difficult situation by employing non-traditional means to obtain revenue. Chapter 2 also examined community college leadership and the characteristics and decision-making strategies employed by these leaders.

In order to investigate current perspectives from Arizona community college leaders, six community college presidents from throughout Arizona, and who represented institutions from urban, rural, and suburban communities, were interviewed.

Analysis and Recommendations

Partnerships. One evident conclusion that can be drawn from this study is the need for more collaboration. One respondent mentioned that, “community colleges [now] operate as silos” which is obviously an impractical circumstance given the current, and likely, future economic environment in which they operate. Another respondent identified partnerships as, “hard to make work... because everyone has their own unique interests.” Community college leaders will have to find ways to encourage interinstitutional collaboration in order for this beneficial practice to thrive and contribute to the current resource problems faced by Arizona community colleges.

As technology expansion continues to “flatten the world” by increasing educational opportunities via distance learning, synchronous and asynchronous online learning, so does the potential for community colleges to grow. Traditionally firm boundaries of educational opportunity are quickly becoming obsolete. This globalization of learning opportunity offers community colleges a potential to increase institutional presence without having to increase physical campus and staffing demands as much as increased program on campus offerings would demand.

Partnerships with high schools. Community colleges have done a good job of partnering with high schools, local businesses, and four-year institutions, but they can do more. As one respondent stated, “we get strength with our high schools and our partners overall.” Community colleges need to increase partnerships with secondary education by looking beyond conventional dual-enrollment articulation. Investing in community college transfer advisors who can reside within the high school would be a good start. There are a rising number of high schools that permit students to concurrently pursue an associate’s degree. This is a trend that has and will continue to grow. One respondent

described one of the benefits that this collaboration provides is the, “decreased number of faculty [both partners] have to have.” Community college leaders need to recognize this opportunity as a means of serving financially strapped community residents and as a source of additional revenue.

Partnerships with four year colleges. Also needed is an expanded collaboration effort with four year colleges and universities. Community colleges often offer productive transfer articulation, although this is traditionally limited to within-state transfer only. For example, 2+2 programs with four year colleges, like that offered by Old Dominion University, have shown promise, but are mostly limited to within state transfer. A larger, nation-wide articulation model would offer more flexibility for learners. This would require the need for common intra-state agreements about some core curricular standards similar to the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). One respondent mentioned that his institution has already started to take advantage of this flattened world by directing efforts toward the, “hundreds of thousands of dollars [from] people who are going without service because of their [California] budget and their situation.” Community colleges can partner with public and private four-year colleges and institutions to offer courses and entire programs to the benefit of their communities and their revenue stream.

Banding together. Community colleges can partner with each other. Partnerships can increase offerings thus providing additional program opportunities to the community at a significantly reduced overhead. This concept is beginning to come to fruition within the Maricopa County Community College District (MCCCD), evident from the

interviews conducted with presidents from within that system. This concept should increase throughout the state, and nationally. Institutional leaders who are interested in this cost-saving idea should investigate the online learning management framework established by Rio Salado College in Tempe, AZ. Course and program offerings which are high-cost, low-enrollment at rural colleges could be “outsourced” to an online powerhouse institution like Rio Salado which can scale their programs to meet those needs with greater efficiency. This would allow rural colleges to provide community-specific programming needs, at minimal cost, thus enabling them to do so without having to sacrifice other aspects of the comprehensive mission.

Private partnerships. Community colleges will need to examine their respective communities to see what business, industry, and government partnerships can enhance the community and support the local workforce. The Great Recession left its’ toll on businesses throughout the nation. Respondents from the more rural locales conveyed this sentiment with little, to no, suggestions for feasible private business –public community college partnerships. That said, community colleges have always been “mavericks” when it comes to forging new ground. I believe community colleges, especially those significantly affected by the recession, will need to think nontraditionally at how they may leverage their strengths to form community partnerships that will support the economic development of the damaged local economies. This is the strength of the community college -to look beyond traditional means and forge new ground.

Communication. Another significant finding of this study is the importance of presidential communication. In one way or another, communication was mentioned by all participants. Being able to communicate effectively, efficiently, accurately and often,

about the fast-paced issues impacting an institution are all important facets of a community college president's day. "Even if the information is not good, faculty and staff would rather hear it from me rather than the grapevine," as one participant expressed. If institutional leaders are able to communicate effectively, the institution becomes collectively engaged which is a strong asset to the college and the community. Having everybody "in the know" regarding significant issues, actions, or decisions projects a much stronger institutional image to a community, than a perception of a leader making critical or impactful decisions behind closed doors. One respondent mentioned the importance of this in his evolution as a community college leader from prior work as a business-person. At many of the institutions, the president will record a five to ten minute video discussing most of the important things that s/he has been doing since the last video. The participants indicated that this medium is a great way to increase presence as well as convey important information *en masse*. Other participants described a "president's blog" which they use as another medium in order to communicate to the college and its' constituents. Technology has increased presidents' capabilities to communicate with the large number of staff, faculty, students, and community effectively and I am certain that this is a trend that will only increase.

Decision making. A strong common response among participants described the method with which they conducted post-recession decision-making. Five of the six participants expressed the need and importance of being very deliberative and participatory in the manner in which decisions are made. Some respondents even expressed the importance of inviting constituents who, "you know you disagree with to the table" in order to come to a sound decision. This is a crucial process that will lead

toward a stronger and more resilient institution. Having all perspectives represented allows for all voices to be heard as well as promoting a greater understanding within the institution. Shared governance is a practice that must continue to grow stronger, or be re-invented within community colleges. The recession has resulted in a stronger transparency and shared governance in which, “all of the factors are considered... and that more people understand, really now, how decisions are made” as one respondent put it. The practice of shared governance is a strong way to synthesize the voices of the community and institution into a sound participatory form of decision-making and support. Incorporating student, faculty, and staff leadership groups can be a good way to build upon shared governance by community college leadership.

Leader-member exchange theory. Shared governance provides presidents with an opportunity to “open up” the “in-group” according to leader-member exchange theory (LMX). LMX suggests that groups evolve from the interactions between leaders and their subordinates (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). The two groups include the in-group and the out-group. The in-group tends to work harder, feel more involved, and share more leadership roles while the out-group only do what is required and have less involvement. By employing shared governance, presidents can not only benefit from making a larger in-group according to LMX, but also build a strong institutional commitment from the community.

Data-driven decision making. In unison with the need for more participative decision making as expressed by the presidents, was the strong demand for data to drive decision making. Participants stated that their decision making process needs to be data and evidence based. Those interviewed believed strongly that this offers greater

transparency – and better decisions! By, “leaving everything on the table for everybody to see,” one president shared how liberated he felt when employing this decision making style. The “evidence speaks for itself” this president would go on to say.

Interestingly, one outlier within this theme stated that his decision making has become more autocratic in response to the recession. His reasoning was that, “ultimately it is the CEO’s decisions that keep the ship moving,” although this response appears to contradict most of the other participants in this study.

Fundraising. Many methods were conveyed by participants describing how their institutions are attempting to offset lost state revenue. Many of these techniques are not unique: reallocate, increase tuition and fees to students, lobbying, etc. Some of the methods that were new to me included the ability of the institution to differentiate itself by offering a course/program/curriculum/learning management system that other institutions are not able to provide. Current literature concludes that an entrepreneurial mindset is needed by community college leaders in order to forge new practices and revenues. This mindset needs to permeate the entire culture of the community college. Community college leaders can do only so much. By promoting entrepreneurial thought within the institution, community college leaders will have a larger net of potential solutions to draw from. This “freedom” to think beyond traditional roles allows staff and faculty alike to become more engaged with institutional issues which can potentially yield significant benefits.

Philanthropy is an avenue currently being investigated and employed by the community college. This is a new role with which many community college leaders are becoming familiar. This is a practice that many respondents signified as important, but

there were few mechanisms in place to foster a philanthropic revenue stream by most institutions represented. This potential revenue base is important to the process of solidifying financial security. Philanthropic giving is a relatively untapped market which may yield substantial revenue. Philanthropic giving still lags considerably behind four-year colleges (Kreisel & Patterson, 2013). According to a recent report by the Century Foundation (2013), community colleges saw single-digit gains in giving over the last year and are predicting a 6.8 percent increase again this year. This is a good sign, but still shows the amount of room available to grow. This report also indicates that the budgets allocated to philanthropic fundraising by community colleges are significantly lower than four-year colleges though which must change.

Surprises

Comprehensive community college mission. One surprise that stood out from the very first interview was the ease with which some participants were willing to sacrifice the comprehensive community college mission. While the comprehensive mission is the cornerstone of the institution of the community college, it has received criticism as being unsustainable for quite a while. McPhail and McPhail (2006) wrote that community colleges should prioritize their mission so that they avoid the multiple stressors of being all things to all constituents as well as the affiliated costs needed to sustain multiple missions. This seemed to be a sentiment that most participants were focusing as a means of sustaining their institution rather than upholding the traditional ideal of what a community college should be. While this initially struck me as bothersome, the explanations and examples of how participants' institutions responded, and continue to respond, to multiple and significant issues, explained presidents'

perception of the unsustainability of the comprehensive mission. As one respondent put it, “if we keep declining, we are going to have to end up [sacrificing the mission], but we are trying to avoid that.” Another respondent suggested that, “community colleges can’t continue to be all things to all people...”

Reactions of leaders to “perfect storm” varied. Another surprise was the variety with which people responded to how they handled these conflicting events. Some participants seemed nonchalant, leaving me wondering if I am pursuing a non-topic, while other participants responded as if the sky were falling. In the same light, I was surprised by the overwhelming sense of optimism held by all participants, no matter the issue being faced. Even if the sky were falling, these leaders projected an unspoken assurance and sense of calm that even though things have been, and continue to be tough, it is not that bad.

Partnerships. The last surprise was the variance of how partnerships were perceived in relation to the size and locale of an institution. One of the larger institutions represented was purposefully not taking on partnerships because they have been questioning, “how big do we really need to be?” On the other end of the spectrum were institutions where the economic downturn hit so badly that there were no businesses left to partner with. The middle of the spectrum seemed to be where institutions sought, and took advantage of, community partnerships.

Community colleges will need to forge new relationships within their communities in order to identify potential avenues for partnering. Partnerships are a potentially profitable method by which a community college can support a workforce, but there must be identifiable partners available! The community college is renowned for

innovating, and this will be just another way in which the institution can evolve. One way a community college can promote healthy community participation is to invite local business leaders to a luncheon with the president. This would allow for the president to meet with local business and industry heads to determine ways in which the community college could help. There is a growing lack of a skilled workforce in the U.S. (Mangan, 2013). Presidents can promote partnerships by luring business and industry leaders who need increasingly skilled workers to their college, a source of training for the jobs needed for twenty-first century commerce. This will take determination and enterprise by college leaders, but will ultimately benefit the institution and the community.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many avenues with which to further explore this phenomenon. More states' community colleges, as well as their leaders, are prime subjects for future inquiries related to the impact of the current economy on the comprehensive mission. Some states have not been impacted as much as Arizona, while there are a few states that have seen far worse. Having a larger body of research from additional states would help to bring clarity to this area of investigation. Discovering legislators' perspectives is an alternative that would yield interesting information that could help practitioners navigate the often-daunting task of seeking governmental funding as new, or sustaining, revenue. It would also be quite useful to conduct a macro quantitative study that can investigate community college leaders, or community college constituents' perspectives of the comprehensive mission in the context of the current economic climate and priorities.

An investigation, using the same research design but focusing on four year public institutions and how they view the economic downturn coupled with increased

enrollments would offer an interesting counter-perspective in light of this study. While four year colleges and universities are well-versed in philanthropic fundraising, scholars should investigate whether fund-raising has become even more crucial during the ‘perfect storm’? Alternatively, an investigation on how private institutions’ responded would be illuminating.

Another recommendation for further study is a national quantitative study which could explore the contemporary feasibility of continued support for the comprehensive community college mission, where administrators see the mission ten years from now, and recommendations for mission prioritization. A national study would be a great way to gauge a significant number of administrators’ perspectives while also potentially providing direction for future leaders to employ.

Confirming Existing Research and Adding to the Body of Knowledge

The findings of this study have both corroborated existing research as well as unearthed new challenges not yet investigated by researchers.

Comprehensive mission. One of the focal points of this study was the sustainability of the comprehensive community college mission. Existing research was confirmed in that contemporary community college leaders continue to do everything within their capacity to sustain the comprehensive mission. The leaders interviewed for all expressed how they “cut around the edges” by readdressing, reassessing, and reallocating (Brumbach & Villadsen, 2002; Dellow & Losinger, 2004; El-Khawas, 2011; Jones & Wellman, 2010) which confirms findings of previous research. The threshold beyond which the comprehensive mission becomes unsustainable is an issue that has not yet been investigated sufficiently. There is a seemingly fine line that exists beyond which

the community college leader is ready to forego the comprehensive mission. Just which and how much economic hardship will push community college leaders to abandon the comprehensive mission needs further analysis. How the participants would disassociate from the comprehensive mission would vary from college to college, but the commonality exists that the comprehensive mission is not sustainable if the economy remains volatile.

Alternative revenues. This study has confirmed contemporary research that describes alternative revenue models which are being employed more frequently by community colleges (Carter, 2011). Revenues that have had moderate success include both fundraising and governmental lobbying (Carter, 2011; Markham, 2008; McMillen, 2011; J. Murray, 2009). This study discovered an apathy, or lack of participation related to these two funding methodologies that would suggest that these methods are either too difficult to undertake, or do not yield the return on investment that existing research may have exaggerated. Regardless, there is a collective “dragging of feet” amongst participants interviewed which is worthy of further investigation.

Partnerships. All of the participants within this study expressed the importance of partnerships within the community college. Actively seeking, and engaging in partnerships supports three of the central tenets of the comprehensive mission of the community college; community, comprehensive educational offerings, and equity. Each participant had positive feedback for how their college has and continues to engage in partnerships within their community which corroborates existing research. The findings by this study showed a varying degree of participation amongst participants due to differing variables which has not been addressed within contemporary research. One

institution was purposely avoiding partnerships due to the significant size to which it has grown over the last two decades. Two other institutions expressed their lack of ability to establish partnerships due to a failing local economy, which has effectively eliminated most local businesses and industry. These reasons for not taking on new partnerships are a significant finding and warrant further inquiry.

Conclusion

State financial support for community colleges is declining because of, and since, the Great Depression of 2008. Community college presidents have been scrambling for dwindling pieces of an ever-shrinking state budget. There are many best practices being employed by colleges to help offset this significant decline of revenue, but there is still a noticeable gap that remains. For community colleges to sustain a comprehensive mission, community support is vital. Community colleges in Arizona are surviving these substantial state budget cuts through the assistance of tax levies. While these can, and do, serve as a foundation for operating revenue, this method is financially enervating already over-encumbered communities. Continuing to increase the tax levies, which is what many of the participants in this study would prefer, is not a sustainable method of subsistence. The community college can endure temporarily with alternative means, but a constant and sustainable avenue of revenue is needed in order for the institution to continue to sustain their comprehensive mission. Until recently, state support has been consistent which allowed community colleges to provide a comprehensive mission for their constituents. Without that constant revenue, the community college simply cannot sustain the comprehensive mission. Our leaders of higher education and local and state government need to devise an approach for obtaining and managing a steady revenue for

our community colleges. In Arizona, state leaders will need to recognize the importance of the community college and how it directly contributes toward greater state revenues by educating our workforce. Until then, community college leaders will continue to pursue temporary recipes of subsisting, and “cut around the edges” until there is nothing left to cut.

The community college is at a crossroads and has faced, and continues to face, difficult times. Fortunately, the actions taken now can positively impact community colleges for decades to come by establishing positive funding methods and developing best practices as they become known.

The community college will continue, optimally with non-conventional thinking and entrepreneurial insight by college leaders, faculty, and staff. Other economic anomalies will occur in the future, possibly with more frequency. It is the responsibility of community college and government leaders to address the factors that contribute to these challenges, make changes as necessary, and to provide sustainable goals and plans for institutions to follow. Leaders in higher education must be able to innovate and adapt so that future economic dilemmas can be successfully confronted.

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APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS REQUESTING PARTICIPATION

January 16, 2013

Dear President :

I am a doctoral candidate in the Community College Leadership Program at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. I am currently in the dissertation phase. My topic is community college presidents during times of economic crisis and enrollment increases. I will be interviewing community college presidents on their perspectives of these topics.

I am writing to invite you to participate in an interview designed to obtain a first-person perspective in regards to the aforementioned topic. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be comprised of a series of semi-structured questions.

Confidentiality will be strictly maintained regarding your identity and responses. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,

Corey W. Carlson
Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University

Principal Investigator:

Name – Corey Carlson

Phone – 928.458.5147

E-mail – ccarl008@odu.edu

Dissertation Chair – Dr. Dana Burnett

Dissertation Chair Contact Information -- dburnett@odu.edu and/or 757.683.3287

APPENDIX B

FOLLOW UP LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS AGREEING TO PARTICIPATE

January 16, 2013

Dear President:

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my student on community college presidents' perspectives! I understand the time constraints demanded by your position and I am truly grateful for you being able to accommodate me!

Your participation will include an interview designed to obtain presidential perspectives of the economic crisis and high enrollment and how these affect decision making. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes and will be comprised of a series of semi-structured questions.

Confidentiality will be strictly maintained regarding your identity and responses. Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw, at any time during the interview process.

Thank you for again for your participation!

Sincerely,

Corey W. Carlson
Doctoral Candidate, Old Dominion University

Principal Investigator:

Name – Corey Carlson

Phone – 928.458.5147

E-mail – ccarl008@odu.edu

Dissertation Chair – Dr. Dana Burnett

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Has your institution experienced a decrease in state revenue over the last five years?
2. Has your institution experienced an increase in enrollment during the last five years?
3. As a result of increased enrollments or decreased revenue, have specific components of the comprehensive community college mission been considered for elimination?
4. Have decreased revenue and/or increases in enrollments affected the way in which you make decisions?
5. How has your decision making changed over the time that you have been a president?
6. How do you manage difficult decisions/situations/dilemmas?
How has the "Great Recession" affected your decision making?
7. What, if any, alternative funding methods have you employed to help offset decreased state funding? If so, please describe.
8. How has the "Great Recession" affected your institutions' funding method(s)?
9. Has institutional lobbying increased to help offset decreased state funding?
10. Has your institution sought out partnerships with regional business(es) to help offset decreased state funding? If so, please describe.
11. Have increased enrollments affected your institution's ability to deliver aspects of your comprehensive mission?
12. What personal characteristics have you found to be the most beneficial when facing significant issues as the leader of a community college?

13. How has your institution changed over the last 4-5 years in response to, or as a result of, the consequences of the Great Recession?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL SCRIPT

Introduction: Thank you sincerely for agreeing to be interview as part of this study on presidential perspectives of the economic crisis, increased enrollment, and decision making. My name is Corey Carlson and I am a doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University. The purpose of this study is to investigate decision making processes of community college presidents relative to resource allocation based on the comprehensive community college mission. I am seeking your first-person perspectives on how the economic crisis coupled with enrollment increases have led toward your personal decision making.

Your identity and responses will remain strictly confidential. No reference to your name or institution will be included in this study. All records of this interview will be destroyed upon completion of this dissertation.

Before we continue, please read and sign the Informed Consent Form. Your signature will indicate that you do consent to participate. Additionally, your initials will indicate that you consent to audio recording of this interview.

This interview will take approximately one hour to complete. I will be asking you a series of semi-structured interview questions. The questions will be asked in the given order with possible probes or clarification.

Once again, thank you for agreeing to this interview. Let's begin.

Conclusion of interview: Thank you very much for your participation. I am grateful for the time in which you have allotted for my interview. Your input will be beneficial toward compiling a greater understanding of how the economic crisis and increased enrollment have affected decision making at the presidential level of the Arizona community college.

APPENDIX E

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE:

Community college presidential perspectives of dichotomous crises: The financial crisis and increased enrollment.

INTRODUCTION

The purposes of this form is to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. The proposed title of this study is Community college presidential perspectives of dichotomous crises: The financial crisis and increased enrollment.

RESEARCHERS

Principal Investigator: Corey Carlson, PhD Candidate
Community College Leadership, Old Dominion University
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Dana Burnett

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY

No known studies have been conducted looking into the subject community college leaders' perspectives during times of economic downturns. This study will explore community college leaders' perspectives as they relate to decreased revenue and increased enrollment.

If you decide to participate, then you will join a study involving research of community college leaders' perspectives during times of economic distress. If you say YES, then your participation will last for approximately 1 hour at an agreed upon locale. Approximately 10 of 20 will be participating in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA

There are no identified exclusionary criteria.

RISKS AND BENEFITS

RISKS: There are no identifiable risks known at this time. With any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified.

BENEFITS: The main benefit to you for participating in this study is sharing your wisdom and expertise for the benefit of others within higher education, and specifically, the community college.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS

The researchers are unable to give you any payment for participating in this study.

NEW INFORMATION

If the researchers find new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All information obtained about you in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations and publications, but the researcher will not identify you. All data will be destroyed upon completion of this study.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. The researchers reserve the right to withdraw your participation in this study, at any time, if they observe potential problems with your continued participation.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Corey Carlson, Principal Investigator at (928) 458-5147, or Dr. Ted Remley, Chair of the Darden College of Education Human Subjects Review Committee at (757) 683-3326, or Dr. George Maihafer the current IRB chair at 757-683-6028 at Old Dominion University, who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Principal Investigator: Corey Carlson - ccarl008@odu.edu - 928.458.5147

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Dana Burnett - dburnett@odu.edu - 757.683.3287

If at any time you feel pressured to participate or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then contact Dr. Theodore P. Remley, Jr., Chair of the Darden College of Education

Human Subjects Review Committee at tremley@odu.edu.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Printed Name & Signature	Date
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